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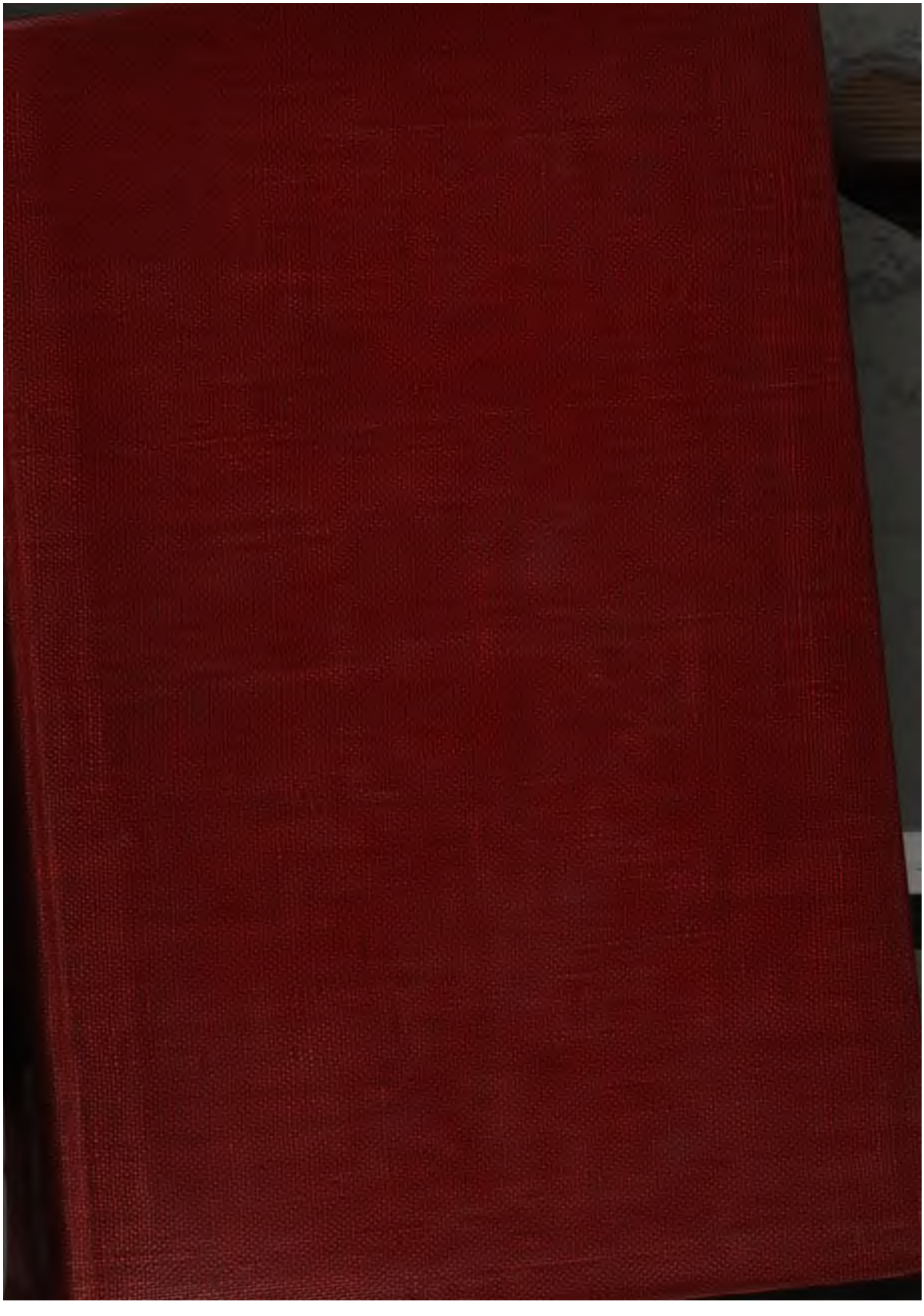

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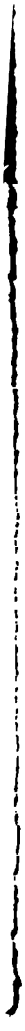

THE WORKS

OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

LIMITED EDITION

V.

LITTLE WHAT'S-HIS-NAME

VOL. I.

Of the LIMITED EDITION of Alphonse Daudet one thousand copies have been printed for America.

This copy is Number 391

"Little What's-His-Name is going to drink some toasts."

THE WORKS OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

LITTLE WHAT'S-HIS-NAME

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE BELLE-NIVERNAISE

TRANSLATED BY JANE MINOT SEDGWICK

HOW JARJAILLE WENT TO HEAVEN

AND OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATED BY KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY WILLIAM P. TRENT

VOLUME I.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURENT-DESROUSSEAUX

BOSTON
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1899

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INTRODUCTION.

Little What's-His-Name (*Le Petit Chose*) Daudet's first published, though not his first written, novel, appeared in 1868, but had been begun in Provence shortly after the death of the Duc de Morny in 1865 had released him from his slight political ties. The first and better part was composed in that Southern France it describes so charmingly; the second part was completed in Paris. The whole book seems to bear the impress of the circumstances under which it was written. It ends with a happy marriage, and Daudet had just found a nobly sympathetic helpmeet. It is full of the milk of human kindness, and its author had had little but generous treatment since the favor of the Empress Eugénie had secured him his political sinecure. Its first chapters form one of the most touching of autobiographies, and his recent residence in Provence had freshened Daudet's recollections of his childhood. Finally Daudet, although then turning his attention to the drama, had not left his poetry far behind and was doing admirable work in short stories; hence it is not surprising to find that *Le Petit Chose* is steeped in a poetic atmosphere

and is obviously the work of a writer not yet used to elaborating his materials. He afterwards expressed the wish that he had not made such early use of his youthful experiences, on the ground that something very good could have been made of them; but it is questionable whether his increased skill as a writer would have compensated for that blurring of the memory from which not even great novelists are surely exempt.

However this may be, it is quite clear that when he wrote *Le Petit Chose* in his early manhood, he succeeded in producing one of the most delightfully idyllic of his works, one that will probably continue to be read as long as any of the more powerful novels of his prime. It is much to his credit as a man and a writer that the misfortunes France underwent in 1870–1871 should have turned Little What's-His-Name into a great novelist; but it will perhaps seem to some people more to his credit that his youthful vicissitudes and his precarious health should have left his exquisite nature as untouched as it appears to be in the first half of his poetical autobiography. Hence it seems unlikely that the Daudet of the *Nabab* will ever inflict upon the Daudet of *Le Petit Chose* the fate that the Daudet of the early poems has already undergone.

But what introduction does such a simple, idyllic story need besides the easily followed injunction — Read and enjoy! Scarcely any, unless we wish to

enjoy it as we do a good old comedy; in which case we should be somewhat at a loss if we did not encounter an encomiastic prologue written by an admirer of the dramatist. In those days, however, the prologue was in verse and the comedy generally in prose; with *Le Petit Chose* the homely prose will be found inevitably in the introduction, not in the charming book itself.

Yet perhaps there is after all something that must be said to the English reader. Daudet's story has two parts, and it would be a great mistake to suppose that the second by itself merits the praise that has just been given. It is a pretty, sentimental romance that ought to suit the good people who can still cry over the pathetic scenes of Daudet's English counterpart, Dickens; but it is surely little more. The motherly care of the elder brother for the younger, the perfect and at times stupid selfishness of the latter, the rustic kindness and simplicity of Pierrotte,—these are not new or strong elements of fiction, although they are by no means so despicable as some thorough-going realists would have us believe. There is sentiment as well as sentimentality in Dickens and in the Daudet of the second part of *Le Petit Chose;* but it is also true that both writers were capable of much higher work. The yielding to the impulse to sentimentalize, however much temporary popularity it may secure, rarely helps a novelist to live. If Goldsmith had not been able

to depict a noble character, it is very doubtful whether *The Vicar of Wakefield* would now be included among the English classics read in schools. Then, too, the writer who sentimentalizes, time and again loses his opportunity to do really effective work on subjects of the greatest interest. For example, Daudet has to tell in his second part of the struggles of an idealistic young poet in the selfish, devouring whirlpool of Paris. How does he do it? Would any competent critic set his descriptions beside any of the corresponding pictures Balzac has painted? Or, to descend to a minute detail, will any one contend that the excellent Abbé Germane, so strongly outlined in the first part of *Le Petit Chose*, is not blurred when he is momentarily introduced in the second? And finally does not Le Petit Chose himself cease to interest us in a manner that cannot be accounted for entirely by his highly developed selfishness — a selfishness, by the way, not sufficiently brought into play perhaps, in the first part? But to what are these defects due — should the reader admit them to be defects — if not to Daudet's access of sentimentalism, when he turned aside from his own experiences and began to weave a romance?

But ah! that wonderful first part! Does it not reproach us for the hard things we are saying about the second? Not only is it precious to every lover of Daudet because of the invaluable

light it throws upon his early years; but it is one of the most perfect representations in literature of childhood's hopes and fears and of youth's aspirations and defeats. It is perfect because it is real. The little Robinson Crusoe of the unused silk factory at Nîmes with his red-headed Friday, Rouget, and his parrot; the ever-weeping Jacques; the cockroaches that swarmed in the wretched apartments at Lyons; the scene of the broken pitcher, with M. Eyssette's unending refrain, "Jacques, tu es un âne!" — these things will never fade from the reader's mind because the author has seen them, heard them, lived them. They are the things that Jacques and Daniel laughed over when they lay in bed that first night in the attic near Saint Germain-des-Prés, and tried in vain to close their eyes; they are the things that still keep a reader from laying the book down. Mr. Walter Pater's admirers grow eloquent over his subtle delineation of the ways of childhood in *The Child in the House;* but the lover of Daudet will neither argue nor declaim in behalf of his favorite — will only re-read with increased delight the first pages of *Le Petit Chose.* Perhaps he would do the same thing if one praised in his presence Dickens's semi-autobiographic *David Copperfield.*

Nor is it different when Le Petit Chose leaves the fast breaking up home at Lyons and begins life as an usher in the school at Alais. The suffer-

ings of the poor *pion* are our sufferings far more than the miseries of the disappointed poet and low comedian are our miseries. We too stand somewhat in dread of M. Viot and his keys, we too wonder what Little Black Eyes makes of life, we too have confidence in the rugged, uncouth Abbé Germane. We should have liked to sit with the tiny scholars in order to hear Le Petit Chose tell them stories; we are glad to find him repentant toward Bamban; we take his part in the famous "Affaire Boucoyran." Finally we sympathize much more with him when he has his first attack of typhoid fever than when he has his second; and we are surprised to find how much we also are affected by the sight of the swinging ring with the loop-knot attached made of a violet necktie. Yet after all there is no reason to be surprised, for the writer of these fascinating pages had obeyed to the letter the precept of Sir Philip Sidney's muse, he had looked in his heart and written.

If now the practical reader should ask, "Has Daudet's description of his life as an usher at Alais produced the good effects upon French schools that Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* is held to have produced on English boarding schools?" one would probably be forced to answer in the negative, in spite of the recent discontent with their schools that has been manifested by some distinguished Frenchmen. The French are too great slaves to system, to be as easily affected as

the English by a book; and, in any case, Daudet was hardly in 1868 the author to stir them deeply. He is much more of an idyllist than Dickens ever was, and if we wish to find a counterpart in his works to the Dotheboys Hall of Dickens, we must turn to the powerful pages in which the "Œuvre de Bethléem" (the Orphanage of Bethlehem) is described in the eighth chapter of the *Nabab* or to the still more powerful description of the Monroval School in *Jack*. In the earlier work Le Petit Chose, though a great sufferer, is also a dreamer, yet by no means such a dreamer as Balzac described in his own autobiographic *Louis Lambert*. It is just as well that Daudet was himself, not Dickens or Balzac, for he was thus enabled to give us as pathetic a school idyl as can be found in literature.

But he has given us something more, not merely in his first part but in his entire story. He has given us a reply that ought to be final, but seemingly has not been — to the very silly but often repeated statement that French home life is inferior in point of tender intimacy to English — a statement which is nearly always based upon a philological argument drawn from the use of "chez soi" and "foyer" as synonyms for "home." It may be safely contended on the other hand that if tender domesticity exists anywhere in the world, it is in France, and that the novels of Daudet, Balzac and others bear out the contention. The

observations of intelligent travellers also bear it out; but *Le Petit Chose* shall suffice for us. Where in English or American literature will one find a story that is fuller of the sentiment that "there's no place like home?" It is the dream of the brave Jacques's heart to gather the scattered family again under one roof. Inspired by this holy purpose, he ceases to weep, stops breaking pitchers and justifying his father in his opprobrious refrain, goes to Paris, works day and night, and lays by a large portion of his scanty salary — "pour reconstruire le foyer." Would he have been any braver, nobler, or truer a lad had he been named James and had he said to himself, "I'll buy the old home back?" And even the selfish Petit Chose feels the flame of this sacred duty kindle within his heart. When he sees his mother condemned to be a dependant upon the bounty of silly old Uncle Baptiste, he too swears "two or three times very solemnly to conduct himself henceforward like a man and no longer to think of anything but re-establishing the *foyer*." Poor Petit Chose! His resolutions are not carried out; but doubtless they were strong enough to make him forget for a while that he had nothing better with which to pace the streets of Paris than a pair of gum-shoes! And even after his selfishness has hastened the death of the good Jacques, his joy at awaking out of his fever in Pierrotte's house with Blue Eyes near by, is tenfold enhanced by the

discovery that the blind mother has escaped from Uncle Baptiste's and will become the most honored inmate of the *foyer* that will soon be inaugurated. No ideas of home! why the little idyl fairly breathes them on almost every page; even if it does close without making proper provision for the return from his peregrinations of "that Wandering Jew of Viniculture," that unfortunate commercial traveller, M. Eyssette, the father.

But not only is *Le Petit Chose* an idyl of hearth and home even though its scene is often laid in a garret; it is also as pure a story as one can well find in any literature. Daudet shows in it that it is perfectly possible to write even of Bohemian Paris without laying exclusive stress on its seamy side. If throughout his work he had shut his eyes to this side he would have fallen, of course, into many of the banalities of his English contemporaries; but there was time enough before him for *Jack* and *Sapho*, and it is a source of profit to himself and his readers that he should have felt the inclination to give his idyl a perfectly pure, clean setting. He could succeed well enough in his purpose of deterring ambitious young provincials from coming to Paris to publish poems on blue butterflies, without becoming a Virgil to conduct them through the Inferno of the great capital. Yet it must not be forgotten that he accomplished all this at the loss, as we have seen, of not a little strength and force, even if his story remains almost

without a blot save the unkind and unnecessary slur upon one of the truest and greatest of modern poets, Leconte de Lisle, author of that *Bhagavat* at which Little What's-His-Name made merry, not perhaps without an appreciable touch of jealousy.

But it is time to conclude, although it is difficult to forbear calling attention to many a delightful feature of the story and of Daudet's way of writing it. Certainly as a specimen of what one may perhaps call intimate, confidential prose, it can have few rivals. Some of the touches simply demand quotation — as for example the description of the fate of the old family servant Annou who sickened in the foggy air of Lyons and had to be forcibly sent home to her beloved *Midi*, where "elle s'y maria de désespoir." Or, again, what more touching than the account of how the little Daniel, having tarried after school to play a game of prisoner's base (*barres*) returned home to find his mother gone to the bedside of his brother the Abbé, how Petit Chose in his despair kept exclaiming to himself — "Never, no never will I play any more prisoner's base when I get out of school." There are dozens of such passages and scenes, and the man who could write them was certain to do powerful work when once his spirit should be awakened by the strenuous events of life. In *Le Petit Chose*, it is necessary to repeat, we have the idyllic element ever present, even when Daudet is holding most closely to the facts of his sad early experience. But the

idyllic and the tragic do not often mix well, and yet the great complex life of modern times requires in part the tragic treatment. Daudet was not able to give this on any considerable scale in 1868; hence the description of the fate of the struggling young poet who sold only one copy of his poems — not an exaggerated incident, by the way, for there is a similar English case well authenticated — would be almost amusing but for the sentimental, not tragic interest given to the unselfish death of la mère Jacques. But while some of us may amuse ourselves by wondering what sort of a story Daudet would have made, had he told it himself, instead of using Daniel as a spokesman, and ended it with a real suicide in the old gymnasium at Alais, the majority of readers will do well not to be hypercritical about sentimentalism or any other faults to be found in this work of a writer not yet thirty, and to enjoy to the full one of the purest and most exquisite stories of youthful experience to be found in French or in any other literature.

W. P. TRENT.

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Photogravured by Goupil & Co., Paris, from Drawings by H. Laurent-Desrousseaux.

"Little What's-His-Name is going to drink some toasts" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

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LITTLE WHAT'S-HIS-NAME.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE FACTORY.

I WAS born on the 13th of May, 18—, in a town of Languedoc, where, as in all Southern towns, there is a great deal of sunshine, not a little dust, a Carmelite convent, and a few Roman remains.

My father, M. Eyssette, who was at this time engaged in the silk industry, had, at the gates of the city, a large factory, in a part of which he had built himself a commodious dwelling-house shaded by plane-trees, and separated from the work-rooms by a large garden. It was there that I came into the world, and passed the first, the only happy years of my life. So it is that my grateful memory has kept an imperishable remembrance of the garden, the factory and the plane-trees; and when, after the ruin of my parents, it became necessary to leave these things, I really regretted them as if they had been human beings.

I must say, in the first place, that my birth brought no good luck to the Eyssette household.

Old Annou, our cook, has often told me since, how my father, then on a journey, received simultaneously the news of my appearance in this world, and that of the disappearance of one of his customers from Marseilles, who had gone off with more than forty thousand francs of his: so that M. Eyssette, pleased and pained at the same time, was naturally in doubt whether to weep over the disappearance of the customer from Marseilles, or to smile at the happy arrival of little Daniel. — You should have wept my dear M. Eyssette, you should have wept doubly.

It is true that I was my parents' unlucky star. From the very day of my birth, incredible misfortunes assailed them from all quarters. First, there was the customer from Marseilles, then two fires in one year, then the strike among the warpers, then our quarrel with my Uncle Baptiste, next a very costly lawsuit with our color-merchants, and, finally, the Revolution of 18—, which gave us the finishing stroke.

From this moment the factory was crippled; little by little the work-rooms became deserted; every week one more loom put by, every month one stamping-table the less. It was sad to see the life leaving our house, as if it were a sick body, slowly, a little day by day. At one time we stopped using the second story, and at another the back courtyard was given up. This lasted for two years; for two years the factory was dying. At last, one day, the workmen did not come; the factory bell did not ring, the wheel of the well

stopped squeaking, the water of the large pool in which the fabrics were washed remained motionless, and soon in the whole factory there were left only M. and Mme. Eyssette, old Annou, my brother Jacques and I; and away in the farther corner, the porter Colombe who remained to take care of the work-rooms, and his son little Rouget.

It was all over, we were ruined.

I was then six or seven years old. As I was very frail and sickly, my parents had not been willing to send me to school. My mother had taught me only how to read and write, and in addition, a few words of Spanish and two or three airs on the guitar, by the aid of which I had acquired in my family the reputation of a little prodigy. Thanks to this system of education, I never went away from home, and was a witness of the death of the house of Eyssette in all its details. I confess I was left unmoved by the spectacle; I found even that our ruin had its pleasant side, since I could frolic all over the factory at my own sweet will, and this I had been able to do only on Sunday when the workmen were there. I said gravely to little Rouget:

"Now the factory is mine; they have given it to me to play in." And little Rouget believed me. He believed in all I told him, little fool.

At home, however, everybody did not take our downfall so easily. All at once, M. Eyssette became very ill-tempered; his disposition was habitually irritable and fiery in the extreme; he loved shouting, violence and fury; but at the bottom he

was an excellent man, except that his hand was quick to strike, his voice loud, and that he felt an imperious need of making all those about him tremble. Ill fortune, instead of depressing him, incensed him. From morning till night, he was in a fearful rage, and, not knowing whom to attack, found fault with everything, with the sun, the mistral, Jacques, old Annou, and the Revolution, oh! above all, the Revolution! To hear my father, you would have sworn that this Revolution of 18— which had brought us to grief, was specially directed against us. So I beg you to believe that the Revolutionists were not in the odor of sanctity in the Eyssette household. God knows what we said of those gentlemen at that time. Even now, when old Papa Eyssette (whom God preserve to us) feels an attack of gout coming on, he stretches himself painfully on his sofa, and we hear him saying! "Oh! those Revolutionists!"

At the time I am speaking of, M. Eyssette had no gout, and the sorrow of finding himself ruined had made him a terrible man whom nobody dared approach. He had to be bled once a week. Everybody about him was silent; we were afraid of him, and at table we asked for bread in a low voice. We did not dare even cry in his presence; therefore, as soon as he had turned his back, there was but one sob from one end of the house to the other; my mother, old Annou, my brother Jacques, and my eldest brother, the Abbé, when he came to see us, all took part in it. My mother, of course, cried because she saw M. Eyssette unhappy; the Abbé

and old Annou cried because they saw Mme. Eyssette cry; as to Jacques, who was still too young to understand our misfortunes, — he was hardly two years older than I was, — he cried out of necessity, for the pleasure of it.

My brother Jacques was a strange child; he had the gift of tears. As far back as I remember, I can see him with red eyes and streaming cheeks. Morning, noon and night, at school, at home and out walking, he cried without ceasing, he cried everywhere. When anybody asked him: "What is the matter?" he answered sobbing: "Nothing is the matter;" and the most curious part of it is that there was nothing the matter. He cried just as people blow their nose, only oftener, that is all. Sometimes M. Eyssette was exasperated, and said to my mother: "That child is absurd; look at him! He is a river." Then Mme. Eyssette would answer in her sweet voice: "What can you expect, my dear? He will get over it as he grows up; at his age I was like him." In the meantime Jacques grew; he grew a great deal even, yet he did not get over it. On the contrary, the capacity this singular child had for shedding torrents of tears without any reason, increased daily, and so it was that the wretchedness of our parents was great good fortune to him. Once for all, he gave himself over to sobbing at his ease for whole days without anybody's asking him what the matter was.

In short, for Jacques as well as for me, our ruin had its pleasant side.

As to me, I was very happy. Nobody paid any more attention to me and I profited by this to play all day with Rouget in the empty work-rooms, where our steps echoed as if in a church, and in the great deserted courtyards, already overgrown with grass. Rouget, the son of Colombe the porter, was a big boy, about twelve years old, as strong as an ox, as devoted as a dog, as silly as a goose, and above all, remarkable for his red hair, to which he owed his nickname of Rouget. Only, I must tell you that Rouget for me was not Rouget: he was by turns my faithful Friday, a tribe of savages, a mutinous crew, or anything that was required of him. And at that time my name was not Daniel Eyssette; I was that extraordinary man, clad in the skins of beasts, whose adventures had been given to me, Master Crusoe himself. Sweet folly! In the evening, after supper, I read over my *Robinson Crusoe*, I learned it by heart; in the daytime, I acted it, acted it madly, and enrolled in my comedy all the things that surrounded me. The factory was no longer the factory; it was my desert island, oh, indeed a desert island! The pools served for the ocean, the garden was a virgin forest, and in the plane-trees there were quantities of crickets which were included in the play although they knew nothing of it.

Rouget, too, never suspected the importance of his rôle. If he had been asked who Robinson Crusoe was, he would have been much puzzled; still I must say that he discharged his duties with the fullest conviction, and that there was nobody

equal to him in imitating the roars of savages. Where had he learned this? I cannot tell, but it is nevertheless true that those great savage roars he brought out of the depths of his throat, as he shook his thick red hair, would have made the bravest tremble. Even I, Robinson himself, was sometimes frightened, and was obliged to say to him in a whisper: "Not so loud, Rouget; you make me afraid."

Unfortunately, if Rouget imitated the cries of savages very well, he knew still better how to repeat the coarse words of street children, and to take the Lord's name in vain. In playing with him, I learned to do as he did, and one day at table, somehow or other, a formidable oath escaped me. There was general consternation. "Who taught you that? Where did you hear it?" It was an event. M. Eyssette spoke immediately of putting me in a house of correction; my eldest brother the Abbé said that first of all I should be sent to confession, since I had come to years of discretion. So they sent me to confession, and a great affair it was! I had to search through all the corners of my conscience to pick up a mass of old sins that had been lying about there for seven years. I could not sleep for two nights, there was such a heap of these devilish sins; I had put the smallest ones on top, but in spite of this the others could be seen; and when, kneeling in the little oaken wardrobe, I had to show them all to the Curé of the Récollets, I thought I should die of fear and confusion.

It was all over, I did not wish to play with Rouget any longer; I knew now, for Saint Paul said it, and the Curé of the Récollets repeated it to me, that the devil is eternally wandering to and fro about us like a lion, *quærens quem devoret.* Oh, that *quærens quem devoret*, what an impression it made upon me! I knew, too, that intriguing Lucifer takes all the shapes he wishes to tempt us; and you could not have cured me of the idea that he had hidden himself in Rouget to teach me how to take God's name in vain. So on returning to the factory, my first care was to inform Friday that he was to stay at home henceforward. Unfortunate Friday! This edict broke his heart; but he acquiesced without a murmur. Sometimes I saw him standing at the door of the porter's lodge, near the work-rooms; he was waiting sadly, and when he saw I was looking at him, the poor boy attempted to move my pity by roaring terribly, and shaking his flaming mane; but the more he roared, the farther away I kept from him. I thought he was like the famous lion *quærens.* I screamed to him: "Go away! I cannot endure you."

Rouget persisted in roaring thus for some days; then, one morning his father grew tired of hearing his roars at home, and sent him off to roar in an apprenticeship, and I saw him no more.

My enthusiasm for Robinson Crusoe did not cool for an instant. Just about this time my Uncle Baptiste suddenly became bored by his parrot and gave it to me. The parrot took the place

of Friday. I installed him in a pretty cage, in the inside of my winter dwelling; and there I was, more like Robinson Crusoe than ever, spending my days alone with this interesting bird, trying to make him say: "Robinson, poor Robinson!" But can you understand how it was that the parrot Uncle Baptiste had given me so as to be rid of its eternal chatter, persevered in not speaking as soon as he belonged to me? No more "Poor Robinson" than anything else; I could get nothing out of him. Nevertheless, I loved him very much, and took the greatest care of him.

We were living together, the parrot and I, in the most austere solitude, when one morning, a truly extraordinary thing happened to me. On that day, I had left my cabin early, and, armed to the teeth, was making explorations across my island. Suddenly I saw coming toward me a group of three or four persons who were speaking loud, and gesticulating with animation. Good Heavens! Men in my island! I had only time to throw myself, down on my face, if you please, behind a cluster of oleanders. The men passed near me without seeing me; I thought I distinguished the voice of Colombe, the porter, and this reassured me a little; but, as soon as they were at a distance, I came out of my hiding-place and followed them afar off, to see what was going to come of all this.

The strangers stayed long in my island. They examined all its details from one end to the other. I saw them enter my grottoes, and sound the

depths of my oceans with their canes. From time to time they stopped and shook their heads. All my fear was, lest they should come and discover my dwellings. O God! what would have become of me! Luckily, this did not happen, and, at the end of half an hour, the men went away without even suspecting that the island was inhabited. As soon as they were gone, I rushed to shut myself up in one of my cabins, and spent the rest of the day in wondering who the men were and what they had come to do.

I was soon to know.

In the evening at supper M. Eyssette solemnly announced to us that the factory was sold, and that in a month we should leave for Lyons, where we were to live henceforward.

It was a terrible blow. It seemed to me that the sky was falling. The factory sold! What! My island, my grottoes, my cabins!

Alas! M. Eyssette had sold the island, the grottoes, and the cabins; we had to leave everything. O God! How I wept!

For a month, while at home they were packing the mirrors and the dishes, I walked, sad and lonely, about my dear factory. I had no heart to play, as you may imagine, oh, no! I sat down in all the corners, and looking at the objects about me, spoke to them as if they were people; I said to the plane-trees: "Good-bye, my dear friends!" and to the pools: "It is all over, we shall never see each other any more." At the end of the garden there was a fine pomegranate-tree, with

beautiful red flowers opening in the sun. I said to it, sobbing: "Give me one of your flowers," and it gave me one. I put it in my breast as a remembrance. I was very unhappy.

However, in the midst of this great sorrow, two things gave me pleasure: first the thought of getting on a ship, then the permission given me to carry my parrot with me. I said to myself that Robinson Crusoe had left his island under very similar conditions, and that gave me courage.

At last the day of departure arrived. M. Eyssette had already been a week at Lyons, having gone ahead with the heavy luggage, so I started in the company of Jacques, my mother and old Annou. My eldest brother, the Abbé, was not to leave, but he came with us as far as the stage of Beaucaire, and Colombe the porter came with us too. He walked in front, pushing an enormous wheelbarrow loaded with trunks. Behind came my brother the Abbé with Mme. Eyssette on his arm.

Poor Abbé, I was never to see him again!

Old Annou followed next, flanked by a huge blue umbrella and by Jacques, who was very glad to go to Lyons, but was crying all the same. Finally, at the tail of the column, came Daniel Eyssette, gravely carrying the parrot's cage, and turning round every moment to look at his dear factory.

As the caravan moved off, the pomegranate-tree rose as high as it could above the garden walls to

see us for the last time. The plane-trees waved their branches in token of farewell. Daniel Eyssette, much moved, furtively kissed the tips of his fingers to all of them.

I left my island the 30th of September 18—.

CHAPTER II.

THE COCKROACHES.

O THINGS of my childhood! What an impression you have left upon me! It seems to me that journey on the Rhone was only yesterday. I can still see the boat and its passengers and crew. The captain's name was Géniès, the chief cook's, Montélimart. Such things are not forgotten.

The voyage lasted three days. I passed those three days on deck, going below only to eat and sleep. The rest of the time I stationed myself at the end of the bow near the anchor. There was a great gong there that was rung when we entered the towns; I sat down beside this gong among heaps of rope, placed the parrot's cage between my legs, and looked about. The Rhone was so broad that I could scarcely see the banks, but I could have wished that it were still wider and that it were called "the sea." The sky was bright, and the water green; large barges moved down with the current. Boatmen, fording the stream on the backs of mules, passed near us, singing. Occasionally the boat went by some tufted island, covered with reeds and willows. "Oh, a desert island!" said I to myself, and devoured it with my eyes.

Toward the end of the third day I thought we were going to have a shower. The sky had suddenly grown dark; a thick mist floated above the stream; in front of the ship a large lantern was lighted, and, in view of these signs, I began to be excited. At this moment, somebody near me said: "There is Lyons!" At the same time the great gong began to ring. It was Lyons.

I saw dimly, through the fog, lights burning on both shores; we passed under one bridge, then under another. Every time, the enormous funnel of the engine bent double and vomited torrents of black smoke that made me cough. On the boat, there was a terrible commotion. The passengers were looking for their trunks; the sailors were swearing and rolling barrels about in the dark. It was raining.

I made haste to join my mother, Jacques, and old Annou, who were at the other end of the boat, and there we were, all four of us, huddled together under Annou's big umbrella, while the boat was being brought up along the quay and the debarkation began.

In fact, if M. Eyssette had not come to take us off, I think we should never have got ashore. He groped his way toward us, calling: "Who goes there? Who goes there?" To this familiar "Who goes there?" we answered: "Friends," all four at once with inexpressible joy and relief. M. Eyssette kissed us briskly, took my brother by one hand and me by the other, said to the women: "Follow me," and we started. Ah, he was a man!

We advanced with some trouble: it was dark, and the deck was slippery. At every step we stumbled against boxes. Suddenly, from the bow of the boat, a strident, despairing voice reached us. "Robinson! Robinson!" said the voice. "O Heavens!" I cried; and attempted to draw away my hand from my father's; he, thinking I had slipped, pressed it still tighter.

The voice began again, more strident and more despairing: "Robinson! Poor Robinson!" I made a new effort to disengage my hand. "My parrot," I cried, "my parrot!"

"Is he speaking now?" asked Jacques.

I should think he was speaking, he could be heard a mile away. In my confusion, I had left him at the bow of the ship, near the anchor, and it was from there he was calling with all his might: "Robinson! Robinson! Poor Robinson!"

Unfortunately, we were far away, and the captain was shouting: "Make haste."

"We will come and get him to-morrow," said M. Eyssette; "nothing is lost on board a boat." Thereupon, in spite of my tears, he dragged me away. Alas! the next day we sent for him and could not find him. Think of my despair: no more Friday? No more parrot! Robinson Crusoe was no longer possible. Moreover, what means was there, with the best will in the world, to devise a desert island, in a fourth story, in a damp and dirty house, in the Rue Lanterne?

Oh, that horrible house! I shall see it all my life: the staircase was sticky; the courtyard was

like a well; the porter, a shoemaker, had his shop against the pump. It was hideous.

The evening of our arrival, as old Annou was installing herself in the kitchen, she gave a cry of distress: "The cockroaches! The cockroaches!" We hurried to her. What a sight! The kitchen was full of these disgusting bugs; they were on the dresser, along the walls, in the drawers, on the mantelpiece, on the sideboard, everywhere. We stepped on them without meaning to do it. Faugh! Annou had already killed a great many; but the more she killed, the more they came. They crawled out through the hole of the sink; we stopped the hole of the sink, but the next evening they came back through some other place, we could not tell where. We were obliged to get a cat expressly to kill them, and every evening there was fearful slaughter in the kitchen.

The cockroaches made me hate Lyons from the very first evening. The next day it was much worse. We had to form new habits; the hours for meals were changed, and the loaves of bread had a different shape from what they had at home. They were called "crowns." What a name!

On Sunday, to cheer ourselves a little, we took a family walk on the quays of the Rhone, with umbrellas. Instinctively we always went toward the South, in the direction of Perrache. "I think that brings us nearer home," said my mother, who pined even more than I. These family excursions were lugubrious. M. Eyssette scolded, Jacques cried all the time, and I kept always in the rear;

I do not know why, but I was ashamed of being in the streets, probably because we were poor.

At the end of a month, old Annou fell ill. The fogs were killing her, and we had to send her back to the South. The poor woman, who loved my mother passionately, could not make up her mind to leave us. She implored us to keep her, promising not to die. We had to put her on a boat by force, and when she reached the South, in desperation, she married.

When Annou had gone, we took no other servant, which seemed to me the height of misery. The porter's wife came up to do the rough work; and my mother burned at the stove-fires her beautiful white hands that I was so fond of kissing; as to the provisions, Jacques bought them. A big basket was put under his arm and he was told to "buy this and that," and he bought this and that very well, always crying however.

Poor Jacques! He was not happy either. M. Eyssette, weary of seeing him eternally in tears, finally took a dislike to him, and overwhelmed him with cuffs. We heard all day long: "Jacques, you are a fool! Jacques, you are an ass!" The truth is that Jacques lost his presence of mind before my father. The efforts he made to restrain his tears made him unattractive. M. Eyssette brought him ill-luck. Listen to the scene of the pitcher.

One evening, just as we were sitting down to table, we found there was not a single drop of water left in the house.

"If you wish, I will go and get some," says the kind little Jacques.

And thereupon he takes the pitcher, — a large one of earthenware.

M. Eyssette shrugs his shoulders: "If Jacques goes," he says, "the pitcher is broken, that's sure."

"You hear, Jacques," says Mme. Eyssette in her gentle voice, "you hear, don't break it; be careful."

M. Eyssette resumes:

"Oh, it is useless for you to tell him not to break it! He will break it all the same."

Here Jacques's mournful voice puts in:

"Why is it that you want me to break it?"

"I do not want you to break it; I merely say that you will break it," answers M. Eyssette in a tone that admits no reply.

Jacques does not answer: he takes the pitcher in a feverish hand, and goes out abruptly, as if he wanted to say: "Oh! I shall break it, shall I? Well, we shall see."

Five minutes, ten minutes pass; Jacques does not return. Mme. Eyssette begins to be worried.

"If only nothing has happened to him!"

"Good gracious! What do you suppose has happened to him?" says M. Eyssette in a surly tone. "He has broken the pitcher, and dares not come back."

Still, as he says this, — for with all his churlish ways, he is the kindest man in the world, — he rises and goes to open the door to see what has

become of Jacques. He has not far to go; Jacques stands on the landing, before the door, with empty hands, silent and petrified. Seeing M. Eyssette, he turns pale, and in a heartbroken and faint voice, — oh, how faint! — he says, "I have broken it." He had broken it.

In the archives of the Eyssette family we call this "the scene of the pitcher."

We had been about two months in Lyons when our parents began to think about our education. My father would have liked to put us to school, but it cost too much. "Suppose we send them to a school for choir-boys?" said Mme. Eyssette; "children seem to do very well there." My father liked this idea, and as Saint-Nizier was the nearest church, they sent us to the school attached to Saint-Nizier.

The school for choir-boys was very amusing. Instead of stuffing our heads with Greek and Latin, as in other institutions, they taught us to serve at high and low mass, to sing the anthems, to make genuflexions, and to swing the censer elegantly, which is very difficult. There were, of course, here and there, some hours in the day devoted to declensions, and to the *Epitome*, but these were only accessories. Above all, we were there for the service of the church. At least once a week, the Abbé Micou said to us solemnly, between two pinches of snuff: "To-morrow, young gentlemen, there will be no class in the morning; we have a funeral on hand."

We had a funeral. What joy! Then there

were baptisms, marriages, a visit from the bishop, and the viaticum carried to the sick. Oh, the viaticum! How proud we were when we could go with it! The priest walked under a little red velvet dais, carrying the host and the holy oils. Two choir-boys held up the dais, and two others escorted it with big gilded lanterns. A fifth walked ahead, shaking a rattle. Generally, this function fell to me. At the passing of the viaticum, the men took off their hats, and the women crossed themselves. When we went by a guard-house, the sentinel cried: "To arms!" and the soldiers ran to draw themselves up in line. "Present arms!" said the officer. The muskets rang, and the drum beat, I shook my rattle three times, as at the *Sanctus*, and we passed on.

Each one of us had in a little wardrobe a complete ecclesiastical outfit: a black cassock with long skirts, an alb, a surplice with full sleeves stiff with starch, black silk stockings, two skull-caps, one of cloth, and the other of velvet, bands bordered with fine white pearls, in fact all that was necessary.

It appears this costume was very becoming to me.

"He is perfectly charming in it," said Mme. Eyssette. Unfortunately, I was very small, and this disheartened me. Imagine that even when I stood on tiptoe, I came up no higher than the white stockings of M. Caduffe, our beadle; and I was very slight, too. Once at mass, as I was changing the position of the gospels, the big book

was so heavy that it dragged me down. I fell my whole length on the altar steps; the lectern was broken and the service interrupted. It was the day of Pentecost; what a scandal! Apart from these trifling inconveniences from my small stature, I was much pleased with my lot, and often, in the evening, as we went to bed, Jacques and I would say to each other: "On the whole, the choir-boys' school is very nice." I am sorry to say we did not stay there long. A friend of the family, rector of a school in the South, wrote one day to my father that if he would like a day scholarship at the Lyons grammar-school for one of his sons, it could be obtained for him.

"It will do for Daniel," said M. Eyssette.

"And what about Jacques?" asked my mother.

"Oh, Jacques! I shall keep him with me; he will be useful to me. Besides, I see he has a taste for business. We will make a merchant of him."

Upon my word, I do not know how M. Eyssette had been able to find out that Jacques had a taste for business. At that time the poor boy had a taste for nothing but tears, and if they had consulted me — But they did not consult him, nor me either.

What struck me first on my arrival at school was that I was the only boy in a blouse. At Lyons, the sons of well-to-do men did not wear blouses; only the street children, *rowdies* as they are called, did. But I had one, a little checked blouse that dated from the time of the factory; I wore a blouse, and looked like a rowdy. When I

entered the class, the boys grinned; they said: "There, he has a blouse!" The teacher made a wry face and took an immediate dislike to me. From that time, when he spoke to me, it was always disdainfully.

He did not call me by name; he always said: "You, over there, Little What 's-His-Name!" And yet I had told him more than twenty times that my name was Daniel Ey-sset-te. In the end my companions nicknamed me "Little What 's-His-Name," and the nickname stuck.

It was not only my blouse that distinguished me from the other children. The others had handsome portfolios of yellow leather, fragrant boxwood inkstands, copy-books bound in boards, and new books with many notes at the bottom of the pages; my books were shabby old volumes bought on the quays, worn, faded and musty; the covers were always in tatters, and sometimes there were pages missing. It is true that Jacques did his best to rebind them for me with thick cardboard and strong glue; but he invariably put on too much glue, and it smelt badly. He had also made me a portfolio with an infinite number of pockets, very convenient, but plastered with too much glue. The need of using glue and cardboard had become a mania with Jacques, like the need of crying. He kept a quantity of little glue-pots constantly before the fire, and whenever he could escape a moment from the shop, he glued and bound with cardboard. The rest of the time he carried packages about

the city, wrote under dictation, went for provisions —in short it was business.

As to me, I found out that when a boy has a scholarship, wears a blouse, and is called "Little What's-His-Name," he must work twice as hard as others in order to equal them, and upon my word, Little What's-His-Name set to work with all his might.

Brave Little What's-His-Name! I see him, in winter, in his fireless room, seated at his work-table, his legs wrapped up in a rug. Outside, the sleet lashed the window-panes. In the shop M. Eyssette could be heard dictating: "I have received your favor of the 8th instant."

And Jacques's mournful voice repeating:

"I have received your favor of the 8th instant."

Now and then the door of the room opened softly, and Mme. Eyssette came in. She walked on tiptoe to Little What's-His-Name. Hush!

"Are you working?" said she to him very low.

"Yes, mother."

"You are not cold?"

"Oh, no!"

Little What's-His-Name lied; he was really very cold.

Then Mme. Eyssette would sit down beside him, with her knitting, counting the stitches in a low voice, and sighing deeply from time to time.

Poor Mme. Eyssette! She was always thinking of her dear country that she had no hope of seeing again. Alas! to her sorrow, to the sorrow of all of us, she was soon to see it again.

CHAPTER III.

HE IS DEAD: PRAY FOR HIM!

IT was a Monday in the month of July. Coming out of school on that day, I had allowed myself to be persuaded to take part in a game of prisoner's bar, and when I decided to go home, it was much later than I could have wished. From the Place des Terreaux to the Rue Lanterne I ran without stopping, my books in my belt, and my cap between my teeth. Still, as I was terribly afraid of my father, I stopped to get my breath a moment, on the staircase, just long enough to invent a story to explain my delay. Thereupon I rang courageously.

M. Eyssette himself came to open the door for me. "How late you are!" he said. I began, trembling, to bring out my story; but the dear man did not let me finish, and, drawing me to his breast, kissed me long and silently.

As I expected a sound rating, at the very least, this reception surprised me. My first idea was that we had the Curé of Saint Nizier at dinner, and I knew that on the days he came, we were never scolded; but, on entering the dining-room, I saw at once that I was mistaken. There were

but two places set at table, my father's and mine.

"Where are my mother and Jacques?" I asked, in amazement.

M. Eyssette answered in a gentle voice that was not customary with him:

"Your mother and Jacques have gone away, Daniel; your brother the Abbé is very ill." Then, seeing that I had turned quite pale, he added almost gayly, to reassure me:

"When I say very ill, that is a mere way of speaking; they wrote us that the Abbé was sick in bed; you know your mother, she wanted to go, and I let her take Jacques with her. After all, it will not be anything. Now, sit down and let us eat; I am dying of hunger."

I sat down to table without speaking, but my heart sank and I had all the trouble in the world to keep back my tears, thinking that my eldest brother the Abbé was very ill. We dined sadly, face to face, in silence. M. Eyssette ate quickly, and drank deep draughts; then he stopped suddenly and relapsed into thought. As to me, I sat motionless at the foot of the table, recalling the charming stories the Abbé used to tell me when he came to the factory. I could see him gallantly tucking up his cassock to step across the pools. I remembered, too, the day of his first mass, when all the family were present, how handsome he looked as he turned toward us, with outstretched arms, saying "*Dominus vobiscum*" in such a sweet voice that Mme. Eyssette cried for joy. Now I imagined

him far away, ill in bed (oh, very ill, for something told me so); and what doubled my pain in knowing this was that I heard a voice crying to me from the depths of my heart: "God is punishing you; it is all your own fault! You should have come straight in, without lying." And, full of the fearful thought that God was going to make his brother die, in order to punish him, Little What's-His-Name fell into despair, saying: "Never, no never again shall I play prisoner's bar after coming out of school."

When the meal was over, the lamp was lighted, and the evening began. M. Eyssette had laid his big ledgers on the tablecloth, in the middle of the fragments of our dessert, and began doing his accounts aloud. Finet, the cockroach cat, was mewing sadly as she prowled round the table; and I had opened the window and stood leaning my elbows on the sill.

It was dark, and the air was heavy. I heard the people below laughing and talking in front of their doors, and the drums of Fort Loyasse beating in the distance. I had been there for a few minutes, thinking of melancholy things and looking out vaguely into the night, when a violent ring at the bell sent me abruptly away from the window. I glanced at my father in alarm, and thought I could see on his face the same quiver of agony and terror that had just passed through me. The ring at the bell had frightened him too.

"Somebody is ringing," said he to me, almost in a whisper.

"Wait, father; let me go," and I rushed toward the door.

A man was standing on the threshold; I saw him indistinctly in the gloom, holding out to me something that I hesitated to take.

"It is a telegram," said he.

"A telegram, O my God! What is it for?" I took it shuddering, and was already closing the door, but the man held it open with his foot, and said coldly:

"You must sign."

I was to sign; but I had not known it, for it was the first despatch I had ever received.

"Who is there, Daniel?" called M. Eyssette in an unsteady voice.

I answered:

"Nothing; it is only a beggar." Making a gesture to the man to wait for me, I ran to my room, and groping my way to the ink, dipped my pen in it, and then returned.

The man said:

"Sign there."

Little What's-His-Name signed with a trembling hand, by the light of the lamps on the stairs; then he shut the door and went back, keeping the despatch hidden under his blouse.

Oh, yes! I kept you well hidden under my blouse, despatch of evil tidings! I did not want M. Eyssette to see you, for I knew beforehand that you came to announce something terrible, and when I opened you, you told me nothing new, do you hear, despatch? You told me nothing that my own heart had not already guessed.

"Was it a beggar?" said my father looking at me.

I answered, unblushingly: "It was a beggar;" and to avert his suspicions, I took up my place again at the window.

I stayed there some time longer, without stirring or speaking, pressing to my breast the paper that was burning me.

Occasionally I tried to reason with myself, and to take courage. I said to myself: "How can you tell? It may be good news. They may have sent word that he is well again." But, at the bottom, I was sure that it was not true, that I was lying to myself, and that the telegram would not say he was well again.

Finally, I decided to go to my room, so as to find out once for all what the truth was. I went out of the dining-room, slowly, so as not to attract attention; but as soon as I reached my room, with what feverish haste I lighted my lamp, and how my hand trembled as I opened that despatch of death! I read it over twenty times, always hoping that I was mistaken, but alas! it was in vain that I read it and re-read it, turning it over, in all senses. I could not make it say anything else than what it had said at first, than what I knew very well it would say:

"He is dead: pray for him!" I cannot tell how long I stood there, crying before that open telegram. I remember only that my eyes smarted a great deal, and that I bathed my face for a long time before leaving my room. Then I went back

to the dining-room holding that horrible telegram in my little clenched hand.

And now, what was I to do? How was I to set about announcing the awful news to my father, and what absurd childishness had induced me to keep it to myself? Must not he have known it, at any rate, either a little earlier, or a little later? What folly! At least, if I had gone straight to him when the telegram arrived, we should have opened it together; but now, there was nothing more to say.

While I was thinking, I drew near the table, and sat down close by the side of M. Eyssette. The poor man had shut his books, and was occupied in tickling Finet's white nose with the end of his pen. It made my heart ache to see him amusing himself thus. I saw his good face, half lighted by the lamp, brighten and smile from time to time, and I longed to say to him: "Oh, no! Don't smile, please don't smile."

Then, as I was looking at him thus, sadly, with the telegram in my hand, M. Eyssette raised his head. Our eyes met, and I do not know what he saw in mine, but I know that his face suddenly changed, and uttering a deep cry, he said to me in a heartbreaking voice: "He is dead, is n't he?" Then, letting the telegram slip from my fingers, I fell sobbing into his arms, and we wept long and wildly, wrapt in each other's embrace, while at our feet Finet played with the despatch, that terrible despatch of death, the cause of all our tears.

Listen to me, for I am telling the truth; these things are long passed; it is long since the dear Abbé whom I loved so much has been lying in the ground; and yet even to-day, whenever I receive a telegram, I cannot open it without a thrill of fear. It seems to me I am going to read that *he is dead* and that I must *pray for him.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE RED COPYBOOK.

In the old missals we find artless illuminations, in which Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows is represented with a long and deep furrow on both cheeks, a divine mark placed there by the artist, as if to say: "Look how she has wept!" I swear I saw that furrow—the furrow of tears—on Mme. Eyssette's wasted face, when she came back from Lyons after her son's funeral.

From that day my poor mother would smile no more. Her gowns were always black, her face always unhappy. She went into deep mourning in her garments as well as in her heart, and she never put it off. Otherwise, nothing was changed in the Eyssette household; it was more melancholy, that is all. The curé of Saint Nizier said a few masses for the repose of the Abbé's soul; two black suits were cut for the children from an old blouse that had belonged to their father, and our sad, sad life began again.

It was some time after our dear Abbé's death, when, one evening at bedtime, I was much surprised to see Jacques double-locking the door of our room, and stopping up the cracks carefully; after that he came toward me with a great air of solemnity and mystery.

I must tell you that since Jacques's return from the South, a remarkable change had taken place in his habits. In the first place, as few will be able to believe, Jacques cried no more, or hardly any more; then, his mad love for using cardboard had all but passed away. Some little pots of glue were still occasionally placed before the fire, but there was no longer the same charm about them; now, if you needed a portfolio, you had to go down on your knees to get it. Incredible to relate, a hat-box that Mme. Eyssette had ordered from him remained for a week unfinished. My parents observed nothing, but I saw very well that something was the matter with Jacques. Several times I had come upon him in the shop, talking and gesticulating to himself. He did not sleep at night; I heard him mutter between his teeth, and then suddenly jump out of bed and go striding up and down the room. This was all unnatural and alarmed me when I thought of it. It seemed to me that Jacques was going mad.

That evening, when I saw him double-locking the door of our room, the idea of his madness rushed into my head, and for a moment I was frightened. Poor Jacques did not notice this, and gravely taking one of my hands in his, he said:

"Daniel, I am going to tell you something, but you must swear to me that you will never speak of it."

I saw at once that Jacques was not crazy, and answered, without hesitation:

"I swear, Jacques."

"Well! Don't you know? Hush! I am writing a poem, a great poem."

"A poem, Jacques? Are *you* writing a poem?"

In answer, Jacques pulled from underneath his jacket an enormous red copybook that he had made himself, at the top of which he had written in his finest hand:

RELIGION! RELIGION!

A POEM IN TWELVE CANTOS.

BY EYSSETTE (JACQUES).

It was so splendid that I felt dizzy.

Do you understand? Jacques, my brother Jacques, a child of thirteen, Jacques of the sobs and little glue-pots, was writing *Religion! Religion! A Poem in Twelve Cantos.*

And nobody suspected it! He was still sent to the greengrocer's, with a basket on his arm, and his father shouted to him oftener than ever:

"Jacques, you are an ass!"

"Ah! Poor dear Eyssette (Jacques)! How gladly I should have fallen upon his neck, if I had dared. But I did not dare. Only think! *Religion! Religion! A Poem in Twelve Cantos!* Nevertheless, truth compels me to acknowledge that this poem in twelve cantos was far from being completed. I believe even, that no more than the four first lines of the first canto had as yet been written; but you know that in works of this kind it is always the beginning that is most difficult, and as Eyssette (Jacques) said very reasonably: "Now

that I have my four first lines, the rest is nothing; it is but an affair of time."[1]

Though the rest was merely an affair of time, Eyssette (Jacques) could never come to the end of it. What can you expect? Poems have their destinies, and it seems that the destiny of *Religion! Religion! A Poem in Twelve Cantos*, was not to be in twelve cantos at all. The poet might do his best, but he could never get farther than the first four lines. There was a fatality about it. Finally, the poor boy, growing impatient, let the poem go to the devil and said farewell to the Muse. (They still talked of the Muse at that time.) The same day, sobs again took possession of him, and the little glue-pots reappeared before the fire. And what about the red copybook? Oh! The red copybook had its destiny, too.

Jacques said to me: "I will give it to you; put what you like in it." And do you know what I put in it? Why, my own poetry! Little What 's-His-Name's poetry. I had caught Jacques's disease.

And now, if the reader will permit, while Little What's-His-Name is busy choosing rhymes, we are going to clear six or seven years of his life at one

[1] Here are the four lines. I give them just as I saw them that evening, written in a large round hand, on the first page of the red copybook:

"*Religion! Religion!*
Sublime mysterious word!
A touching voice in silence heard,
Compassion! Compassion!"

Do not laugh; this had cost him much trouble.

leap. I am in haste to reach the spring of 18—, the recollection of which remains in the Eyssette household. Certain dates are remembered in all families.

Moreover, the reader will lose nothing in not knowing the fragment of my life that I pass over in silence. It is all the same old story; tears and poverty, delays about the rent, creditors making scenes, my mother's diamonds sold, our plate in pawn, holes in the sheets, ragged trousers, privations of all kinds; daily humiliations, the eternal "What shall we do to-morrow?" the sheriff's insolent ring at the bell, the porter's smile as we passed him; then loans, then protests, and then, and then—

Here we are now in 18—.

It was in that year Little What's-His-Name was finishing his course in philosophy.

He was, if my memory serve me, a very pretentious young fellow, taking himself entirely seriously as a philosopher, and as a poet too; besides that, he was no higher than Hop-o'-my-Thumb, and without a hair to his chin.

Now, one morning that this great philosopher, Little What's-His-Name, was getting ready to go to his class, M. Eyssette, the elder, called him into the shop, and, as he entered, said roughly:

"Daniel, throw away your books; you are not to go to school any more."

Having said this, M. Eyssette, the elder, began to stride up and down the shop without speaking. He seemed much moved, and Little What's-His-

Name too, I assure you. After a few minutes' silence, M. Eyssette, the elder, resumed:

"My boy," said he, "I have some bad news to give you, very bad indeed. We are all going to be obliged to separate, and this is why —"

Here a great heartbreaking sob resounded behind the door that stood ajar. "Jacques, you are a fool!" cried M. Eyssette, without turning round; then he went on:

"When we came to Lyons, eight years ago, ruined by the Revolutionists, I hoped, by dint of hard work to build up our fortunes again; but the devil has been in it. I have succeeded only in plunging us up to our necks in debt and poverty. Now, it is all over, and we are stuck in the mire. In order to get out there is but one course to take, now that you are all grown up, and that is to sell the little we have left, and each one to seek his fortune independently."

Another sob from the invisible Jacques interrupted M. Eyssette; but he was so much agitated himself that he was not angry. He only made a sign to Daniel to shut the door, and when the door was shut, he continued:

"This is what I have decided upon: until a new disposition of things, your mother will go to live in the South with her brother, your uncle Baptiste, Jacques will stay at Lyons; he has got a little place at the Mont-de-piété. I mean to become a commercial traveller in the service of the Associated Company of Wine-Merchants. And you, too, my poor boy, must also make your living.

I have just now received a letter from the rector proposing a place as under-master for you; there, read what he says."

Little What 's-His-Name took the letter.

"From what I see," said he, as he read, "I have no time to lose."

"You must go to-morrow."

"Very well; I will go."

Thereupon, Little What 's-His-Name folded the letter and returned it to his father with a steady hand. He was a great philosopher, as you see.

At this moment, Mme. Eyssette entered the shop, and Jacques came timidly behind her. Both went up to Little What 's-His-Name and kissed him in silence; they had known what was to happen since the night before.

"Pack his trunk," said M. Eyssette shortly, "he is going by the boat to-morrow morning."

Mme. Eyssette heaved a deep sigh, Jacques gave a hasty sob, and nothing more was said.

We began to be accustomed to misfortune in our household.

The day after this memorable one, the whole family accompanied Little What 's-His-Name to the boat. By a singular coincidence it was the same boat that had carried the Eyssettes to Lyons, six years before, — Captain Geniès, and chief cook Montélimart. We naturally remembered Annou's umbrella, Robinson Crusoe's parrot, and other incidents of our landing. These recollections did something toward cheering my sad departure, and brought the shadow of a smile to Mme. Eyssette's lips.

Suddenly the bell rang; it was time to go.

Little What's-His-Name tore himself from the embraces of his friends, and bravely crossed the gang-plank.

"Be a good boy," called his father.

"Keep well," said Mme. Eyssette.

Jacques tried to speak, but he could not, for he was crying too hard.

Little What 's-His-Name was not crying, not he. As I have had the honor of telling you, he was a great philosopher, and it is absolutely necessary for a philosopher to be unmoved.

And yet, God knows he loved those dear creatures that he left behind him in the fog; God knows he would have gladly given his flesh and blood for them. But what else can you expect? The joy of leaving Lyons, the excitement of the journey, the pride of finding himself a man, a grown man and free, travelling by himself and earning his living, — all this intoxicated Little What's-His-Name, and prevented him from thinking, as he should have done, of the three beloved beings who stood sobbing on the quays of the Rhone.

Ah, those three were not philosophers! Anxiously and tenderly they watched the asthmatic progress of the steamboat, and when its plume of smoke was no larger than a swallow on the horizon they were still waving and calling good-bye.

All this time our philosopher was walking up and down the deck, with his hands in his pockets, and his head very high. He whistled, spat a long

distance, stared at the women, inspected the working of the boat, swaggering as if he were a big fellow, and thinking himself charming. Before they had even reached Vienne, he had told Montélimart, the cook, and his two scullions that he had a position in a school, and made a good living there. These gentlemen congratulated him, and this made him very proud.

Once, as he was walking from one end of the ship to the other, our philosopher stumbled against a pile of rope in the bow, near the big gong, upon which, six years ago, Robinson Crusoe had sat for so many hours, with his parrot between his legs. The pile of rope made him laugh a great deal, and blush a little.

"How silly I must have seemed," thought he, "dragging that big blue cage and that absurd parrot about with me everywhere."

Poor philosopher! He did not foresee that, all through his life, he should be condemned to drag about in the same silly way, a blue cage, the color of illusion, and a green parrot, the color of hope!

Ah, as I now write these lines, the poor boy still carries his big blue cage; only day by day, the blue paint is peeling off from the bars, and the green parrot has lost half his feathers, alas!

Little What's-His-Name's first care, upon arriving at his native place, was to go to the academy where the rector lived.

The rector, a friend of his father, was a tall fine-

looking man, spare and active, with nothing of the pedant or anything resembling it about him. He received Eyssette with great kindness, and yet, as the boy was shown into the room, the good man could not repress a gesture of surprise.

"Heavens!" said he, "how little he is!"

The truth is that Little What's-His-Name was ridiculously small; and then, he looked so young and slight, too.

The rector's exclamation was a terrible blow to him.

"They will not have anything to do with me," thought he, and he trembled all over.

Fortunately, as if he guessed all that passed through the poor little brain, the rector resumed:

"Come here, my boy. We are going to make an under-master of you. At your age, with your face and figure, the business will be harder than for others. Still, my dear child, as it is absolutely necessary for you to earn your own living, we shall arrange for you for the best. To begin with, we shall not put you in a great establishment; I shall send you to a communal school, a few miles from here, at Sarlande, in the mountains. There you will serve your apprenticeship as a man, you will become seasoned to the trade, and will put on a beard; when that has grown, we shall see!"

While he was speaking, the rector wrote to the principal of the school of Sarlande, to introduce his protégé. Having finished his letter, he handed it to Little What's-His-Name, and recommended him to leave the same day. He then gave him

some wise advice, and dismissed him with a friendly tap on the cheek, promising not to lose sight of him.

Little What's-His-Name was very happy. He raced down the old staircase at full speed, and, without stopping to take breath, was off to engage his place for Sarlande.

The stage does not go till afternoon, so there are four hours to wait. Little What's-His-Name profits by them to parade in the sun on the esplanade, and show himself to his compatriots. This first duty accomplished, it occurs to him to get something to eat, and he goes in quest of a tavern adapted to his purse. Just opposite the barracks, he sees one that looks spick and span and has a fine new signboard:

The Inn of the Jolly Travellers.

"This is exactly what I want," he thinks. And after a few minutes' hesitation, for it is the first time Little What's-His-Name has entered a restaurant, he opens the door resolutely.

The tavern happens at this moment to be empty. Within are whitewashed walls, and a few oaken tables; in a corner some tall canes, tipped with copper and ornamented with many colored ribbons, belonging to the guests of the tavern; at the desk sits a big man bending over a newspaper, snoring.

"Hulloa! I want somebody," said Little What's-His-Name, striking with his clenched fist on the table, like an old frequenter of taverns.

The big man at the desk does not wake for such a trifle, but the landlady appears from the depths of a back room. As she sees the new customer the angel of chance has brought her, she utters a loud cry.

"Oh, mercy! Monsieur Daniel!"

"Annou! dear old Annou!" answers Little What 's-His-Name, and there they are in each other's arms.

Ah, yes! It is Annou, old Annou, former servant of the Eyssettes, now a tavern-keeper's wife, and the devoted friend of her customers, married to Jean Peyrol, the big fellow snoring over there at the desk. And how happy she is, if you only knew, dear kind Annou; how happy she is to see M. Daniel again! How she hugs and kisses him, nearly stifling him!

In the midst of these effusions, the man at the desk wakes up.

At first he is a little surprised by the warm reception his wife is giving the young stranger, but when he hears the young stranger is M. Daniel Eyssette in person, Jean Peyrol turns red with pleasure and is all eagerness to serve his illustrious visitor.

"Have you breakfasted, Monsieur Daniel?"

"No, indeed, I have not, thank you, Peyrol, and that is precisely why I came in here."

Gracious Heavens! M. Eyssette has not breakfasted! Old Annou runs to the kitchen, Jean Peyrol rushes to the cellar, — a noble cellar his customers called it.

In a twinkling the cloth is spread, and the table is laid; Little What's-His-Name has but to sit down and set to work. On his left, Annou cuts slices of bread for him to eat with his eggs, fresh laid eggs, white and flaky. At his right, Jean Peyrol pours him out some old Château-Neuf-des-Papes, which looks like a handful of rubies thrown into his glass. Little What's-His-Name is very happy; he eats like a Templar, drinks like a Knight of Malta, and yet finds it possible to relate, between his mouthfuls, how he has just received an appointment in a school, which will enable him to make an honorable living. You ought to see with what an air he says "*make an honorable living!*" Old Annou almost faints with admiration.

Jean Peyrol's enthusiasm is less intense; it seems to him quite natural that M. Eyssette should earn his living, since he is old enough to do so. At M. Daniel's age, he, Jean Peyrol, had already been running about the world for four or five years, and did not cost his family a farthing; on the contrary —

You must understand, however, the worthy tavern-keeper keeps his reflections to himself. What! dare to compare Jean Peyrol with Daniel Eyssette! Annou would never allow it!

In the meantime, Little What's-His-Name goes ahead at a great rate. He talks, drinks, and gets excited; his eyes sparkle, his cheeks glow. Hulloa! Master Peyrol, go and get glasses! Little What's-His-Name is going to drink some toasts. Jean Peyrol brings the glasses, and they drink the

toasts; first to Mme. Eyssette, next to M. Eyssette, then to Jacques, to Daniel, to old Annou, to Annou's husband, to the school,—to what do not they drink?

Two hours pass thus in libations and chat. They talk of the gloomy past and of the rose-colored future; they recall the factory, Lyons, the Rue Lanterne, and the poor Abbé they all loved so well.

All at once, Little What 's-His-Name rises to go.

"What, already?" says old Annou sadly.

Little What 's-His-Name excuses himself, he has to see some one in the town before leaving; it is a very important visit. What a pity; it is so pleasant here, and there are still so many things to talk about. However, since it is necessary, and since M. Daniel has some one to see in town, his friends of the Jolly Travellers will not keep him any longer. "A pleasant journey, Monsieur Daniel! May God take care of you, dear master!" And Jean Peyrol and his wife accompany him to the middle of the street with their benedictions.

Now can you guess who it is in town that Little What 's-His-Name wants to see before leaving?

It is the factory, the factory he loved so much, and for which he has so often wept; it is the gardens, the work-rooms, the tall plane-trees, all those friends of his childhood, all his early joys. Why not? The heart of man has its weaknesses; it loves what it can, even wood and stones, even a factory. Besides, history tells us that old Robin-

son Crusoe, after his return to England, took again to the sea, and sailed I know not how many thousand miles to see his desert island again.

So it is not surprising that Little What's-His-Name should go a few steps in order to see his.

The tall plane-trees, looking over the houses with their plumy heads, have already recognized their old friend, who is coming toward them at the top of his speed. From far off, they beckon to him, and bend one to another, as if to say: "There is Daniel Eyssette! Daniel Eyssette has come back!"

And he is hastening, hastening on; but when he reaches the front of the factory he stops in amazement.

High grey walls rise before him, without a branch of oleander or pomegranate showing above them. No more windows or dormers; no more work-rooms, but a chapel. Above the door is a red stone cross with some Latin round it!

O sorrow! The factory is no longer the factory; it is a convent of Carmelite nuns, where men may never enter.

CHAPTER V.

EARNING A LIVING.

SARLANDE is a little town in the Cévennes, built in the depths of a narrow valley that the mountains shut in on all sides with a high wall. When the sun shines it is a furnace; when the north wind blows it is an ice-house.

On the evening of my arrival, the north wind had been raging all day, and although it was spring, Little What's-His-Name, perched on the top of the stage, felt the cold penetrate the very centre of his being as he entered the town.

The streets were dark and deserted. On the parade-ground, a few people were waiting for the stage and walking to and fro before the ill-lighted office.

As soon as I got down from the top, I engaged somebody to show me the way to the school, without losing a minute. I was in haste to enter upon my duties.

The school was not far from the parade-ground, and after the man who carried my trunk had piloted me through two or three broad silent streets, he stopped before a large house, which looked as if everything in it had been dead for years.

"Here we are," said he, raising the enormous knocker of the door.

The knocker fell heavily, very heavily, and the door opened of its own accord. We went in.

I waited a moment in the dark vestibule. The man put my trunk down on the ground; I paid him, and he went off in haste. The huge door closed behind him, heavily, very heavily. Soon afterwards a drowsy porter, with a big lantern in his hand, approached me.

"I suppose you are a new boy?" he said sleepily.

He took me for one of the scholars. "I am not a scholar; I have come here as under-master, take me to the principal."

The porter seemed surprised; he lifted his cap slightly, and begged me to enter his lodge for a moment. Just then, the principal was at chapel with the boys, he said, but he would take me to him as soon as evening prayers were over.

They had just finished supper in the lodge. A tall handsome fellow with a blond moustache was enjoying a glass of brandy by the side of a thin sickly little woman, yellow as saffron, and muffled up to her ears in a faded shawl.

"What is it, Monsieur Cassagne?" asked the man with a moustache.

"It is the new under-master," answered the porter, pointing at me. "The gentleman is so small that, at first, I took him for one of the boys."

"The truth is," said the man with a moustache, looking at me over his glass, "that we have some

boys here much bigger and even older than this gentleman. The elder of the two Veillons, for instance."

"And Crouzat," added the porter.

"And Soubeyrol," said the woman.

Thereupon they began to whisper together, bending over their nasty brandy, and staring at me out of the corners of their eyes. Outside we could hear the north wind howling, and the shrill voices of the boys reciting litanies in the chapel.

Suddenly a bell rang, and a loud noise of steps was heard in the halls.

"Prayers are over," said M. Cassagne to me, rising; "let us go up to the principal." He took the lantern, and I followed.

The school seemed to me immense. There were interminable corridors, large vestibules, wide staircases, with wrought-iron banisters; everything was old, black and smoky. The porter informed me that before '89 the house had been used as a naval school, and had counted as many as eight hundred boys, all of the most aristocratic class.

As he finished giving me these important details, we reached the principal's study. M. Cassagne softly opened a padded folding-door, and tapped twice on the wood-work.

A voice answered: "Come in," and we entered.

It was a very large study, with green hangings. At the far end, in front of a long table, the principal was writing by the pale light of a lamp, that was completely shaded by a screen.

"Sir," said the porter, pushing me before him,

"He turned toward me, and I could examine at my ease his little pale, thin face."

"here is the new master who has come to take M. Serrières' place."

"Very well," said the principal, without moving.

The porter bowed, and went out. I stood in the middle of the room, twisting my hat in my fingers.

When the principal had finished, he turned toward me, and I could examine at my ease his little pale, thin face, lighted by a pair of cold, colorless eyes. He, on his side, in order to see me better, raised the lamp-screen, and put an eye-glass on his nose.

"Why, he is a child!" he cried, bouncing upon his chair. "What do they expect me to do with a child?"

This time, Little What's-His-Name was terribly frightened; he saw himself in the street without resources. He could hardly muster strength enough to stammer a few words, and to hand the principal the letter of introduction he had for him.

The principal took the letter, read it, re-read it, folded it, unfolded it, and read it again; then he ended by saying that, thanks to the very particular recommendation of the rector, and to the respectability of my family, he consented to take me in, although dismayed by my extreme youth. He then launched into a long speech about the gravity of my new duties; but I did not listen to him. The essential thing for me was not to be sent off. I was not sent off, and I was happy, foolishly happy. I could have wished the principal had a thousand hands so I might kiss them all.

A formidable noise of rusty iron stopped my

effusions. I turned quickly and found myself face to face with a tall red-whiskered personage, who had just come into the study without my hearing him. This was the inspector-general. His head was bent to one side, like the *Ecce Homo*; he looked at me with the sweetest of smiles, shaking a bunch of keys of all sizes that hung from his forefinger. His smile might have prejudiced me in his favor, but the keys clashed with a terrible noise, — clink, clank, clink! which frightened me.

"Monsieur Viot," said the principal, "here is the young man who has just come to take M. Serrières' place."

M. Viot bowed, and gave me the sweetest smile in the world. His keys, on the contrary, stirred ironically and maliciously, as if to say: "This little man to take M. Serrières' place! Oh, come now! come now!"

The principal understood, as well as I, what the keys said, and added, with a sigh:

"I know that in losing M. Serrières we sustain an almost irreparable loss" (here the keys genuinely uttered a sigh), "but I am sure that if M. Viot will take the new master in his special charge, and inculcate in him his valuable ideas upon teaching, the order and discipline of the school will not suffer too much by M. Serrières' departure."

With the same smile and the same sweetness, M. Viot answered that his good-will was already mine, and that he would gladly help me with his advice; but the keys bore me no good-will. It

was enough to hear them clashing and squeaking angrily: "If you move, little fellow, beware."

"Monsieur Eyssette," concluded the principal, "You may go now. You must spend to-night at the hotel. Come here to-morrow by eight o'clock. Good-night," and he dismissed me with a dignified gesture. M. Viot, more smiling and sweeter than ever, accompanied me to the door; but, before taking leave of me, he slipped a little paper book into my hand. "These are the rules of the house," he said; "read and reflect."

Then he opened the door, and closed it upon me, shaking his keys in a wonderful manner: "clink, clank, clink!"

The two gentlemen had forgotten to give me a light, and I wandered for some minutes through the long, dark corridors, feeling the walls in my endeavors to find my way. Here and there a little moonlight entered through the grating of a lofty window and helped me to get my bearings. Suddenly, in the gloom of the galleries, a luminous point shone, and came toward me. I went a few steps farther; the light grew larger, approached nearer, passed beside me, moved on, and disappeared. It was like a vision; but fleeting as it was, I was able to catch its most minute details.

Imagine two women, no, two shadows — one of them old, wrinkled, shrivelled up, bent double, with enormous spectacles that hid half her face; the other, young and slim, a little thin like all phantoms, but having — what phantoms generally have not — a pair of black eyes, very big, and so

black, so very black. The old woman carried a little copper lamp in her hand, but the black eyes carried nothing. The two shadows passed by me, rapidly and silently, without seeing me, and for long after they had vanished, I was still standing there, in the same place, under the double impression of charm and terror.

I began again to feel my way, but my heart was beating very hard, and I kept seeing before me, in the darkness, the horrible fairy in spectacles, walking beside the black eyes.

It was, however, necessary to find a perch for the night, and it was no easy business. Fortunately, the man with the moustache, whom I found smoking his pipe before the porter's lodge, immediately put himself at my disposal, and proposed to take me to a little inn that would not be too dear, and where I should be treated like a prince. You may fancy whether I was glad to accept.

The man with the moustache looked like a good fellow; on the way I learned that his name was Roger, that he was a teacher of dancing, riding, fencing, and gymnastics in the school of Sarlande, and that he had served for a long time in the African light horse. This was enough to make him entirely attractive to me. Children are always inclined to like soldiers. We separated at the door of the inn with much shaking of hands and the explicit promise of becoming friends.

And now, reader, I have a confession to make to you.

When Little What's-His-Name found himself

alone in his cold room, in front of his bed in that strange and vulgar inn, far from those whom he loved, his heart burst, and the great philosopher wept like a child. Life terrified him now; he felt weak and helpless to meet it, and he cried and cried. All at once, in the midst of his tears, the image of his own people passed before his eyes; he saw the house empty, the family dispersed, his mother in one place, his father in another. No roof, no hearth! And then, forgetting his own distress, and thinking only of their common misery, Little What's-His-Name made a great and beautiful resolution: that of raising again the house of Eyssette and of rebuilding the hearth by himself. After this, proud of having set such a noble aim for his life, he dried the tears that were unworthy of a man, of a rebuilder of the family hearth, and without losing a minute, began to read M. Viot's rules, so as to find out about his new duties.

These rules, which M. Viot, the author, had fondly copied with his own hand, formed a veritable treatise, methodically divided into three parts:

1. Duties of a master toward his superiors.
2. Duties of a master toward his colleagues.
3. Duties of a master toward his pupils.

All possibilities were foreseen, from the broken pane to the two hands lifted in study hour at the same time. All the details of a master's life were recorded, from the figure of his salary to the half bottle of wine to which he was entitled at meals.

The list of regulations ended, with a beautiful

burst of eloquence, in a discourse on the usefulness of the regulations themselves; but in spite of his respect for M. Viot's work, Little What's-His-Name had not the strength of mind to read it to the end, and right in the finest passage of the treatise, he went to sleep.

That night I slept ill, and a thousand fantastic dreams troubled my slumbers. Now it was the terrible keys of M. Viot that I thought I heard, clink, clank, clink; or, again, the fairy in spectacles who came to sit by my bedside and awoke me with a start; at other times, the black eyes too — oh! how black they were — stationed themselves at the foot of my bed, and looked at me with strange persistence.

The next day, at eight o'clock, I reached the school. M. Viot stood at the door, with his bunch of keys in his hand, superintending the entrance of the day scholars. He received me with his sweetest smile.

"Wait in the vestibule," said he, "and when the boys have gone in, I will present you to your colleagues."

I waited in the vestibule, walking to and fro, and bowing low to the teachers, who arrived hurriedly, and out of breath. One of these gentlemen only returned my bow; he was a priest, the professor of philosophy, "an eccentric person," M. Viot said to me. I took a fancy at once to this eccentric person.

The bell rang, the classes were made up. Four or five tall fellows, from twenty-five to thirty years

old, ill dressed, and with vulgar faces, came skipping up, and stopped, confused by M. Viot's aspect.

"Gentlemen," said the inspector-general, presenting me to them, "this is M. Daniel Eyssette, your new colleague."

Having said this, he bowed slowly, and retired, still smiling, with his head still on one side, still shaking his horrible keys.

My colleagues and I looked at one another, for a moment, in silence.

The tallest and stoutest among them began to speak first; he was M. Serrières, the famous Serrières, whose place I was about to fill.

"Oho!" cried he gayly, "I might remark that though one master succeed another, he need not resemble him."

This was an allusion to the prodigious difference of height that existed between us. We laughed a great, great deal, and I the first; but I assure you that at that moment Little What's-His-Name would gladly have sold his soul to the devil to be just a few inches taller.

"That is no matter," added the big Serrières, holding out his hand to me; "though we may not be built on the same pattern, it will not prevent our emptying a few bottles together. Come along with us now; I am going to give a farewell treat of punch, at the Café Barbette, and I want you to join us; we can make acquaintance as we drink."

Without giving me time to reply, he pulled my

arm through his, and dragged me out. The Café Barbette, where my new colleagues took me, was on the parade ground. It was a favorite haunt of the non-commissioned officers of the garrison, and what struck me as I entered, was the number of shakoes and sword-belts hanging upon the pegs.

On that day, Serrières' departure and his farewell treat had attracted all the customers of the place in full force. The non-commissioned officers, to whom Serrières introduced me as we arrived, welcomed me with much cordiality. To tell the truth, however, Little What's-His-Name's appearance caused no great sensation, and I was very soon forgotten, in the corner of the room where I had timidly taken refuge. While the glasses were being filled, Serrières came and sat down beside me; he had taken off his coat and held between his teeth a long clay pipe on which his name was inscribed in porcelain letters. All the masters had pipes like it, at the Café Barbette.

"Well, colleague!" said the big Serrières, "you see we have some fun occasionally in our profession. You really came just at the right time for beginning at Sarlande. In the first place the absinthe at the Café Barbette is excellent, and, then, too, you will not be too badly off at the 'jail'!"

By the "jail" he meant the school.

"You will have the small boys to teach, little scamps that you can rule with a rod of iron. You ought to see how I have disciplined them! The principal is kind enough; the masters are good

fellows; there is nobody but the old woman and Viot—"

"What old woman?" I asked with a shudder.

"Oh! you 'll know her very soon. At all hours of the day and night you will meet her prowling about the school, wearing an enormous pair of spectacles. She is an aunt of the principal, and acts as a sort of housekeeper. The wretch! If we don't die with hunger it's not her fault."

By Serrières' description, I recognized the fairy in spectacles, and in spite of all I could do, I felt that I was blushing. A dozen times I was on the point of interrupting my colleague and asking about the black eyes, but I did not dare. What, speak of the black eyes at the Café Barbette!

In the meanwhile, the punch was going the rounds; empty glasses were filled, full glasses were emptied; there were toasts and shouts: the men brandished billiard cues in the air; and nudged one another with loud laughter, puns and confidences.

Gradually, Little What 's-His-Name felt less shy. He had left his corner and was walking about the café with his glass in his hand, talking in a loud voice.

Now the non-commissioned officers had become his friends; he related shamelessly to one of them that he belonged to a rich family, and that after sowing his wild oats he had been sent off from his father's house, and had become a master to earn his living, but he did not think he should stay long at the school. That was natural, since his family was so rich!

Ah, if his friends at Lyons could have heard him at that moment!

This is the way of men, however! When they learned, at the Café Barbette, that I had been exiled from my family, that I was a young rogue and a scrapegrace, and not, as they might have thought, a poor fellow forced by his poverty into school-teaching, they all looked at me more favorably. The older non-commissioned officers did not disdain to address me, and as we were about to go, Roger, the fencing-master, my friend of the night before, rose and proposed a toast to Daniel Eyssette. You may imagine how proud Little What 's-His-Name was.

The toast to Daniel Eyssette was the signal for departure. It was a quarter to ten, that is to say, the hour for returning to the school.

The man with the keys was waiting at the door.

"Monsieur Serrières," said he to my tall colleague who was rather unsteady after his farewell punch, "you are now, for the last time to conduct your pupils to the class-room; as soon as they are all assembled, the principal and I shall come to install the new master."

In fact, some minutes afterwards, the principal, M. Viot and the new master made their solemn entrance into the class-room.

Everybody rose.

The principal presented me to the boys in a speech that was rather long, but full of dignity; then he retired, followed by the big Serrières who was growing more and more affected by the punch

he had taken. M. Viot remained after the others; he made no speech but his keys — clink, clank, clink — spoke for him in so terrible — clink, clank, clink — so threatening a manner, that all the boys hid their heads behind the desk-covers, and the new master himself was not at his ease.

As soon as the terrible keys had gone away, a mass of mischievous faces appeared from behind the desks; all the pen-handles flew to the boys' lips, and all those little bright, wild, mocking eyes were fixed upon me, while a long whisper passed from desk to desk.

A little annoyed, I slowly ascended the steps to my seat; I tried to look fiercely about me, and then, raising my voice, cried, between two loud, sharp raps upon the table:

"To work, gentlemen, to work!"

It was thus that Little What's-His-Name began to hold his first study-hour.

CHAPTER VI.

THE JUNIORS.

THE little fellows were not naughty; it was the others. They never did me any harm, and I loved them because their hearts were not yet hardened by the school life and I could read all their soul in their eyes.

I never punished them. What good would it have done? Do we punish birds? When they chirped too loud I had only to call: "Silence!" and my aviary was immediately hushed, at least for five minutes.

The oldest of my class was eleven. Eleven, only think of it! And the big Serrières had boasted that he ruled them with a rod of iron.

I did not rule them with a rod of iron: I tried always to be kind to them, that is all.

Sometimes, when they had been very good, I would tell them a story. A story, what joy! Quick as lightning they folded their copy-books together, shut their books; threw their inkstands, rulers, pen-handles, and everything else into the desks; then, with their arms folded upon the top, they opened their eyes wide and listened. I had composed on purpose for them, five or six fanciful little tales: "The first appearance of a grass-

hopper," "The misfortunes of Jack Rabbit," etc. Then as now, the good La Fontaine was my favorite saint in the literary calendar, and my stories were merely commentaries upon his fables; only I put part of my own history into them. There was always a poor cricket obliged to earn his living like Little What 's-His-Name, and some ladybirds that pasted cardboard together and sobbed like Eyssette (Jacques). This amused the children, and amused me, too, very much. Unfortunately, M. Viot did not desire us to amuse ourselves in this way.

Three or four times a week the terrible man with the keys made a tour of inspection in the school, to see whether all was being carried on according to the regulations. Now, on one of these days he reached the class-room just at the most pathetic moment in the history of Jack Rabbit. Every one started as he entered. The children were scared and looked at one another. The narrator stopped short, and Jack Rabbit, abashed, stood with one paw in the air, pricking up his long ears with fright.

M. Viot stopped in front of my seat, and, smiling, cast a long glance of amazement over the desks that had been stripped of their furnishings. He did not speak, but his keys shook ferociously: "Clink, clank, clink! you rascals; it seems you don't work here any more."

Trembling, I tried to appease the terrible keys.

"These gentlemen have been studying very hard lately," I stammered; "I wanted to reward them by telling them a little story."

M. Viot did not answer. He bowed and smiled, made his keys clash once more, and then went out.

That afternoon, at the four o'clock recess, he came up to me, and, still smiling and silent, handed me the book of rules, open at page 12: "The duties of a master to his pupils."

I understood that I was not to tell any more stories, and I never did again.

For some days my children were inconsolable. They missed Jack Rabbit, and it broke my heart not to be able to give him back to them. I loved those little fellows so much, if you could only know how much! We were never separated. The school was made up of three very distinct divisions: the seniors, the intermediates, and the juniors; each division had its own court, its dormitory and its class-room. So the little boys were all my own; it seemed to me that I had thirty-five children.

Except these, I had no other friends. It was in vain that M. Viot smiled at me, took me by the arm at the recreation hour, and gave me advice on the subject of discipline. I did not like him; I could never like him; I was too much afraid of his keys. I never saw the principal. The professors despised Little What's-His-Name, and turned up their noses at him. As to my colleagues, the liking that the man with the keys appeared to show me had alienated them all; besides, since my introduction to the non-commissioned officers, I had never returned to the

Café Barbette, and those good fellows could not forgive that.

Even Cassagne the porter and the fencing-master Roger were against me. The fencing-master particularly seemed to owe me a terrible grudge, and when I passed by him, he twirled his moustache fiercely, and rolled his eyes round as if he wanted to sabre a hundred Arabs. Once he said very loud to Cassagne, looking toward me, that he did not like spies. Cassagne did not answer, but I could see very well by his manner that he did not like them either. What spies did he mean? It made me think very hard.

In view of this universal dislike, I formed a brave resolution. The master of the intermediate class shared a small room with me, on the third story, under the roof; there it was that I took refuge during the recitation hour. As my colleague passed all his time at the Café Barbette, the room belonged to me; it was my own room, my home.

As soon as I entered it, I double-locked the door, and dragged my trunk, — there were no chairs in my room — to an old bureau covered with inkspots, and inscriptions cut with a penknife; I spread out my books upon it, and then to work! It was in the springtime, then. When I raised my head, I saw the blue sky, and the tall trees in the courtyard already in leaf. There was no noise outside. From time to time, the monotonous voice of a boy reciting his lesson, the exclamation of an angry teacher, a quarrel among the sparrows

in the branches; then, all became silent again, and the school seemed asleep.

Little What's-His-Name was not asleep. He was not even dreaming,—which is an adorable way of sleeping. He was studying, studying unceasingly; stuffing his brain with Greek and Latin enough to make it burst.

Sometimes, in the midst of his dry work, a mysterious hand tapped on the door.

"Who is there?"

"It is I, the Muse, your old friend; the wife of the red copybook; open the door quickly, Little What's-His-Name."

But Little What's-his-Name took care not to open his door. It was not a question of the Muse then, I can tell you!

To the devil with the red copybook! The important thing of the moment was to write a great many Greek exercises, to get a degree, be appointed professor, and rebuild, as soon as possible, the fortunes of the Eyssette family.

The thought that I was working for my family gave me great courage, and made my life sweeter to me,—even my room was adorned by it. O my dear, dear attic! What happy hours I spent between your four walls! How hard I worked there, and how brave I felt!

If I had some happy hours, I had some wretched ones, too. Twice a week, Sunday and Thursday, I had to take the children out for a walk. That walk was torture to me.

Ordinarily, we went to the *Meadow*, a broad

lawn stretching like a carpet as far as the foot of the mountain, a mile from the town. A few tall chestnut trees, three or four public-houses, painted yellow, and a fresh spring bubbling out of the turf, made the place gay and attractive to the eye. The three divisions of the school made their way there separately; once there, they were all put under the charge of a single master, and I was always that master. My two colleagues went to get themselves treated by the big boys in the neighboring public-houses, and, as they never invited me, I stayed to look after the scholars. A hard task in this lovely spot!

It would have been so delightful to lie down on the green grass in the shade of the chestnut trees, and to breathe in the scent of the wild thyme, listening to the song of the little spring! Instead of that, I had to watch, shout, and punish. I had the whole school on my hands; it was terrible.

But the most terrible part of all, was not keeping charge of the boys in the Meadow; it was passing through the town with my division, the division of the juniors. The other divisions fell into step wonderfully well, and made their heels ring, like old soldiers, as if they had been drilled to the sound of the drum. But my little boys had none of these fine accomplishments. They did not march in line, but took hands and chattered all along the way. It was useless for me to call: "Keep your intervals!" for they could not understand me and walked on in disorder.

I was rather pleased with the head of my column.

There I placed the biggest and most serious boys, those who wore coats; but at the tail, what confusion and disarray! A wild set of little brats with rumpled hair, dirty hands and tattered trousers! I did not dare look at them.

"*Desinit in piscem,*" said the smiling M. Viot, in reference to this, for even he could be witty on occasions. The truth is that the tail of my column presented a sorry appearance.

Can you understand the despair I felt at showing myself in such a plight in the streets of Sarlande, especially on Sunday? The bells were pealing, and the streets full of people. I met boarding-school misses going to vespers, milliners in pink bonnets, and dandies in pearl-gray trousers. I had to go past all these people with a threadbare coat and a ridiculous class. What a mortification!

Among all those little dishevelled demons that I took to walk in town twice a week, there was one in particular, a half-boarder, who drove me to despair by his ugliness and bad behavior.

Fancy a horrible little stunted creature, so little that he was absurd; besides that, awkward, dirty, uncombed, ill-dressed, smelling of the gutter; and, moreover, to cap the climax, horribly bandy-legged.

Never had such a scholar, if such an object as that may be called a scholar, been inscribed before upon the books of an institution of learning. It was enough to dishonor any school.

For my part, I had taken a dislike to him, and when I saw him, on the days that we went for our

walk, slouching at the tail of the column with the grace of a young cub, I felt a furious desire to kick him away, for the honor of my division.

Bamban — we had nicknamed him Bamban on account of his more than irregular gait — Bamban was far from belonging to an aristocratic family. It was easy to see that by his manners, by his way of speaking, and, above all, by the strange acquaintances he made in the place.

All the little street urchins of Sarlande were his friends.

Thanks to him, when we went out, we always had at our heels a crowd of scamps turning cartwheels behind us, calling Bamban by name, pointing at him, throwing chestnut shells, and playing a thousand other pranks of the same description. My children were much amused by it, but it did not divert me, and every week I addressed to the principal a circumstantial report of Bamban and the numerous disorders his presence involved.

Unfortunately I received no answer to my reports, and I was obliged to appear in the streets, accompanied by Bamban dirtier and more bandy-legged than ever.

On one particular Sunday, a bright sunshiny holiday, he arrived for the walk in such a state of dress that we were all horrified. You have never dreamt of anything like it. His hands were black, there were no strings to his shoes; he was covered with mud up to his ears; his trousers had almost entirely gone, — he was a monster.

The most ludicrous part of it was that he had

evidently been made very fine that day, before he was sent to me. His hair had been better combed than usual, and was still stiff with pomade; and there was something about the way in which his cravat was tied that spoke of his mother's fingers. But there were many gutters to pass before reaching the school!

Bamban had rolled in every one of them.

When I saw him take his place among the others, peaceful and smiling, as if nothing had happened, I felt an impulse of indignation and disgust.

I shouted to him: "Go home."

Bamban thought I was joking, and continued to smile. He considered himself especially fine that day.

I cried again: "Go home! Go home!"

He looked at me sadly and submissively, with imploring eyes; but I was inexorable, and the division started, leaving him alone, motionless in the middle of the street.

I thought myself rid of him for the day; but, as we were leaving the town I heard laughter and whispering in my rear that made me turn my head.

Four or five steps behind us, Bamban was gravely following the column.

"Double your step," said I to the first two.

The boys understood that they were asked to play a trick on Bamban, and the division set off at the devil's own pace.

From time to time we turned to find whether

Bamban could keep up with us, and laughed to see him a long way off, the size of a man's hand, trotting along on the dusty road, in the midst of the cake and lemonade sellers.

The crazy boy arrived at the Meadow almost at the same time with us, only he was pale with fatigue, and dragged his legs along pitifully.

My heart was touched; and, a little ashamed of my cruelty, I called him gently to me.

He wore a little faded blouse, with red checks, like the blouse Little What's-His-Name had when he went to school at Lyons.

I recognized the blouse at once, and said to myself: "Aren't you ashamed, you wretch? It is yourself, it is Little What's-His-Name whom you take pleasure in torturing." And full of secret tears, I began to devote myself to the poor outcast with all my heart.

Bamban had sat down upon the ground because his legs hurt him. I sat down beside him, and talked to him. I bought an orange for him; I should have liked to wash his feet.

From that day, Bamban became my friend. I learned some affecting details concerning him.

He was the son of a farrier, who had heard the advantages of education extolled on all sides, and was slaving himself to death, poor man, to send his son to school as a half-boarder. But alas! Bamban was not fitted for going to school, and did not profit by it in the least.

The day of his arrival, they gave him a model of pothooks, and told him to copy them. So for a

year, Bamban made pothooks, and what pothooks, good Heavens! Crooked, blotted, lame, halting pothooks; pothooks peculiar to Bamban!

Nobody paid attention to him. He did not belong to any class in particular; generally, he entered any one that he saw open. One day, he was found making pothooks in the class of philosophy. Bamban was certainly an odd little scholar.

Sometimes, I looked at him in the class-room, bent double over his paper, perspiring, panting, sticking out his tongue, holding his pen in both hands and leaning on it with all his might, as if he wanted to pierce the table. At every pothook he dipped his pen in the ink, and, at the end of every line, put his tongue in again, and stopped to rest, rubbing his hands. Bamban worked with a better will now that we were friends.

When he had finished a page, he made haste to scramble up the steps to my seat, and placed his masterpiece in front of me, in silence.

I would give him an affectionate little pat, and say: "That's very nice!" It was hideous, but I did not like to discourage him.

In fact, little by little, the pothooks began to stand up straighter, the pen spluttered less, and there was less ink on the copybooks. I think I might have succeeded in teaching him something, but, unfortunately, destiny separated us. The master of the intermediates left the school, and, as the end of the year was at hand, the principal was unwilling to engage a new master. A bearded rhe-

torician was put in charge of the junior class, and I was given that of the intermediates.

I considered this a catastrophe.

In the first place, I was afraid of the intermediates. I had seen their behavior on the days at the Meadow, and the thought that I was now to spend all my time with them made my heart sink.

Then I was forced to leave my little boys, the dear little fellows I loved so much. How would the bearded rhetorician treat them? What would become of Bamban? I was genuinely unhappy.

And the juniors, too, were grieved to have me go. The last time I held their study hour, there was a moment of emotion when the bell rang. They all wanted to kiss me, and some of them even, I assure you, thought of charming things to say to me.

And Bamban?

Bamban did not speak; only, just as I was leaving the room, he approached me, quite flushed, and put solemnly into my hand, a splendid copy-book of pothooks that he had made expressly for me.

Poor Bamban!

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNDER-MASTER.

So I was put in possession of the class of intermediates.

In it I found about fifty mischievous boys, chubby-cheeked young mountaineers from twelve to fourteen years old. They were sons of farmers who had made money and had sent their boys to school to get them made into little bourgeois, upon payment of a hundred and twenty francs a quarter.

Rough, rude, and arrogant, speaking among themselves only a coarse dialect of the Cévennes which I could not understand, they had, almost all of them, the kind of ugliness peculiar to boys just growing up; big hands covered with chilblains, voices like braying donkeys, brutal expressions, and above all the rest, a special school flavor. They hated me at once, before they knew me. For them, I was the enemy, the under-master, and from the first day that I took my seat in their class-room, there was war between us, war relentless, continual, unremitting.

Ah, cruel boys, how they made me suffer!

I should like to speak of it without bitterness, for those melancholy times are now so far distant;

and yet, I cannot, for, if you will believe it, as I write these lines, I feel my hand tremble feverishly with emotion. I seem to be back there again.

They do not think of me any more, I suppose. They no longer remember Little What 's-His-Name, nor the beautiful eye-glass he bought to give himself a more dignified air.

My former pupils are now men, serious-minded men. Soubeyrol must be a notary somewhere up there in the Cévennes; Veillon junior, a clerk of the court; Loupi, an apothecary, and Bouzanquet, a veterinary. They have positions, and are stout and successful.

Sometimes, however, when they meet at the club, or on the square in front of the church, they remember their good times at school, and then, perhaps, they may talk of me.

"Look here, Veillon, do you recollect little Eyssette, the under-master at Sarlande, with his long hair and his pasty face? What fine tricks we used to play upon him!"

It is true, gentlemen, you did play fine tricks upon him, and your old under-master has not yet forgotten them.

Ah, that unhappy under-master! He made you laugh enough, and you made him cry enough! Yes, cry; you made him cry, and that added zest to your tricks.

How many times, at the end of a day of torture, the poor wretch, cowering in his little bed, bit the sheet to prevent your hearing his sobs!

It is so terrible to live in the midst of ill-will, to

be always afraid, always on the lookout, always angry and in arms; it is so terrible to punish, for one can be unjust against his will, — so terrible to doubt, to be watching everywhere for pitfalls, not to be able to eat or sleep in peace, and to be always thinking, even in a quiet moment: "O God! what are they going to do now?"

No, even should he live a hundred years, Daniel Eyssette the under-master will never forget all he suffered in the school of Sarlande, after the sad day in which he took charge of the intermediates.

And yet, for I must tell the truth, I had gained something by changing my class: now I saw the black eyes.

Twice a day, at the recreation hours, I caught sight of them at a distance working at a window on the first story that overlooked the court-yard of the intermediates. They were there, bigger and blacker than ever, bending from morning to night over an interminable seam, for the black eyes were sewing; they sewed without ceasing. It was for sewing, for nothing else but sewing that the old fairy in spectacles had taken them from a foundling asylum, — the black eyes had never known either father or mother, — and from one end of the year to the other, they sewed, sewed without respite under the implacable gaze of the horrible fairy in spectacles, who was spinning her distaff beside them.

I watched them. The hours of recreation seemed to me too short. I could have passed my life under the blessed window at which the black

eyes were working. And they, too, knew I was there. From time to time, they were raised from the seam, and we talked to each other with a glance, without speaking.

"You are very unhappy, then, Monsieur Eyssette?"

"And you, too, poor black eyes?"

"We have neither father nor mother."

"And my father and mother are far away."

"The fairy in spectacles is terrible, if you only knew."

"And the boys make me very miserable, I can tell you."

"Courage, Monsieur Eyssette."

"Courage, beautiful black eyes."

We never said more than this. I was always afraid of seeing M. Viot appear with his keys, — clink, clank, clink; — and up there, at the window, the black eyes had their M. Viot, too. After a moment's conversation, they fell again very quickly, and returned to their seam under the fierce glare of the huge steel-mounted spectacles.

Dear black eyes, we never spoke except at a long distance, and by furtive glances, and yet I loved them with my whole soul.

There was the Abbé Germane, besides, whom I was fond of.

This Abbé was the professor of philosophy. He was considered eccentric, and in the school everybody feared him, even the principal and M. Viot. He spoke little, and in a curt dictatorial tone, using ceremony to no one; and walked with

long strides, his head thrown back, holding up his cassock and making the heels of his buckled shoes ring as loud as a dragoon's. He was tall and strong, and for a long time, I had thought him handsome, but one day, on getting a nearer view of him, I perceived that his noble leonine countenance had been horribly disfigured by the small-pox. Not an inch of his face that was not scarred and creased and seamed; he was Mirabeau in a cassock.

The Abbé lived alone and sombrely, in a little room he occupied at the end of the house that was known as the 'Old School.' Nobody ever visited him, except his two brothers, worthless scamps, who belonged to my class and for whose education he paid. In the evening, when I crossed the court-yards to go up to the dormitory, I could see up there, in the black and ruinous buildings of the old school, a little pale light burning; it was the lamp of the Abbé Germane. Very often, too, in the morning, as I went down to the six o'clock study-hour, I could see, through the mist, that the lamp was still burning; the Abbé Germane had not gone to bed. It was said he was engaged in writing a great philosophical work.

As for me, even before making his acquaintance, I felt a great liking for the strange Abbé. His fine and yet fearful face, beaming with intelligence, attracted me; only I had been so frightened by tales of his eccentricities and rudeness that I dared not approach him. I did go to him, however, and fortunately for me.

The circumstances were as follows:

I must tell you that at that time, I was plunged in up to my ears in the history of philosophy. Rough work for Little What's-His-Name!

Now, on a certain day, I was possessed by the desire of reading Condillac. Between you and me, the old fellow is really not worth reading; he is a sham philosopher, and all his philosophical stock-in-trade could be packed in a nutshell; but, you know, when one is young, one has entirely wrong ideas on men and things.

So I wanted to read Condillac. I had to have a Condillac at any cost. Unfortunately, the school library was absolutely without it, and the booksellers of Sarlande did not keep the article. I resolved to apply to the Abbé Germane. His brothers had told me his room contained more than two thousand volumes, so that I had no doubt of his possessing the book of my dreams. But I was in terror of that strange man, and in order to make up my mind to go near his lodging, I needed every whit of my love for M. de Condillac.

When I reached the door, my legs were trembling with fear. I knocked twice, very softly.

"Come in," answered the voice of a Titan.

The terrible Abbé Germane was seated astride a low chair, with his legs stretched out, and his cassock tucked up, showing the large muscles that stood out vigorously, on his black silk stockings. Leaning his elbow on the back of the chair, he was reading a red-edged folio, and smoking a little cutty-pipe of the short brown order.

"It is you," said he to me, scarcely raising his

eyes from the folio. "Good-morning! How are you? What is it you want?"

His peremptory voice, the severe aspect of the room all lined with books, and the cavalier fashion in which he was seated, the little pipe, too, between his teeth, all these combined to make me feel very shy.

I managed somehow, however, to explain the object of my visit, and to ask for the famous volume of Condillac.

"Condillac! You want to read Condillac," answered the Abbé Germane, smiling. "What an odd idea! Should n't you prefer to smoke a pipe with me? Unhook that pretty little pipe that is hanging over there against the wall, and light it; you will see it is better than all the Condillacs in the world."

I blushed and made a gesture of refusal.

"You don't want to smoke? Just as you like, my boy. Your Condillac is up there, on the third shelf to the left; you can take it, I will lend it to you. Only don't hurt it, or I will cut off your ears."

I reached the Condillac on the third shelf to the left, and prepared to go, but the Abbé detained me.

"Are you studying philosophy, then?" said he, looking me in the eye. "Is it possible that you believe in it? Stuff, pure stuff, my boy! And to think they wanted to make me a teacher of philosophy! Just imagine! Teach what? Absolute nothingness. Since they were about it, they

might just as well have named me inspector-general of the stars, or controller of pipe-smoke. A plague take it, a man must sometimes try strange trades to earn his living. You, too, know something about it, don't you? Oh! you need not blush; I know that you are not happy, poor little under-master, and that the boys make your life hard for you."

Here the Abbé Germane stopped a moment. He seemed to be in a passion, and struck his pipe against his nail furiously. I was much moved when I found myself pitied by this man who was so worthy of respect, and put up the Condillac in front of my eyes, to hide the great tears that filled them.

The Abbé resumed, almost immediately:

"By the way, I forgot to ask you — Do you love God? You must love him, you see, my boy, and trust in him, and pray constantly to him; or else you will never get out of this. I know only three remedies for the great miseries of life; work, prayer, and a pipe, — a clay pipe, very short, remember that. As to the philosophers, don't count upon them; they will never console you for anything. I have passed through that, you may believe me."

"I believe you, sir."

"Now go, you tire me. When you want books, you have but to come and get them. The key of my room is always above the door, and the philosophers always on the third shelf, to the left. Don't say anything more; good-bye."

Thereupon he took up his reading again, and let me go out, without even looking at me.

From that day I had all the philosophers of the universe at my disposal; I went into the Abbé Germane's room, without knocking, as into my own. Generally, at the hours I went there, the Abbé was teaching his class, and the room empty. The little pipe lay on the edge of the table, in the midst of red-leaved folios and innumerable papers covered with scrawls. Sometimes, the Abbé Germane was there. I found him reading, writing, or walking up and down at a great rate. As I entered I would say timidly:

"Good morning, sir."

More often than not, he would not answer. I took my philosopher from the third shelf to the left, and went off, without his even appearing aware of my presence. When the end of the year came, we had not exchanged two dozen words; but that did not matter; something within me told me we were great friends.

In the meantime, the vacation was approaching. I could hear, every day, the music scholars, in the drawing-class humming airs from the polkas and marches to be played at the distribution of the prizes. The polkas delighted everybody. At the last study-hour of the evening, rolls of little calendars were produced from all the desks, and each child struck off from his own the day that had just ended. "Another day less!" The courtyards were full of boards for the platform: the armchairs were beaten, and the carpets shaken; no more

work, no more discipline. Only, always, to the very end, the same hatred of the under-master, and the same terrible practical jokes.

Finally, the great day came. It was time; I could hold out no longer.

The prizes were distributed in my court-yard, that of the intermediates; I can still see it with its variegated tent, its walls hung with white draperies, its tall green trees covered with flags, and underneath, a confused mass of caps of all kinds, shakoes, helmets, bonnets with flowers, fine gala hats, feathers, ribbons, top-knots and plumes. At the farther end there was a long platform on which the school faculty were seated in armchairs of garnet velvet. Oh, that platform! How little one felt before it, and what a great air of superiority and disdain it gave to those upon it! Not one of those gentlemen kept his ordinary expression.

The Abbé Germane was on the platform too, but he did not appear conscious of it. Stretched out in his armchair, his head thrown back, he listened to his neighbors with an inattentive ear, and seemed to follow with his eyes, through the foliage, the smoke of an imaginary pipe.

Below the platform, the band, the trumpets and other wind instruments gleaming in the sun; the three divisions crowded upon the benches with the masters bringing up the lines; then, behind, the throng of parents, and the teacher of the second class offering his arm to the ladies, and crying: "Make room there!" Finally, lost to view in the

crowd, M. Viot's keys could be heard; running from one end of the court-yard to the other, clink, clank, clink! to the right, to the left, here, there and everywhere, at the same time.

The ceremony began, and it was very hot. There was no air under the tent: there were stout and crimson ladies, dozing under the shade of their marabou feathers, and bald-headed gentlemen mopping their heads with bright colored handkerchiefs. Everything was red: faces, carpets, flags and armchairs. We had three addresses that were much applauded, but I did not hear them. Up at the window in the first story, the black eyes were sewing, in the usual place and my soul went out toward them. Poor black eyes! Even on that occasion, the fairy in spectacles would not allow them a holiday.

When the last name of the last boy who received honorable mention, had been called, the band struck up a triumphal march, and the people began to disperse. There was a general hubbub. The teachers came down from the platform; the children sprang over the benches to rejoin their families.

There was kissing on all sides, and cries of: "This way, this way!" The sisters of the prize boys went off proudly with their brothers' crowns; silk gowns rustled over the chairs. Little What 's-His-Name stood motionless behind a tree, and watched the lovely ladies go by, feeling shabby and quite ashamed of his threadbare coat.

Little by little the court-yard became empty.

At the great door the principal and M. Viot stood, caressing the children as they passed, and bowing down to the ground before the parents.

"Till next year, till next year," said the principal, with a cajoling smile. M. Viot's keys jingled endearments: "Clink, clank, clink! Come back, my little friends, come back to us next year."

The children carelessly allowed themselves to be embraced, and flew downstairs at a bound.

Some of them got into handsome carriages, emblazoned with coats of arms, where their mothers and sisters pulled in their full skirts so as to make place for them. A smack of the whip, and they were off to the castle. We are going to see again our parks, our lawns, the swing under the acacia trees, the aviaries filled with rare birds, the pond with the two swans, and the broad balustraded terrace where we take water-ices in the evening.

Others climbed into family wagons, beside pretty girls laughing merrily under their white caps. The farmer's wife, with a gold chain round her neck, was driving the horses. Whip up, Mathurine! They are going back to the farm, to eat bread and butter and drink muscatel; to hunt birds all day long, and roll in the sweet-smelling hay.

Happy boys! They were going away, they were all leaving. Ah, if I had been able to leave too!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLACK EYES.

NOW the school was deserted; everybody had gone. From one end of the dormitories to the other, squadrons of big rats make cavalry charges in broad daylight. The inkstands dry up in the desks. In the trees of the court-yard, the contingent of sparrows is having a holiday; these gentlemen have invited all their friends from town, from the bishop's palace, from the sub-prefecture, and from morning to night there is a deafening chatter.

In his room under the roof Little What's-His-Name listens to them as he works. He has been allowed to remain at the school through the vacation, out of charity, and he profits by it to study the Greek philosophers to the death. Only the room is too hot, and the ceiling too low; it is suffocating there. There are no shutters to the windows, and the sun comes in like a torch, setting everything on fire. The plaster on the beams cracks and drops off; large flies, stupefied by the heat, sleep glued to the panes. Little What's-His-Name himself makes great efforts not to sleep. His head is heavy as lead, and his eyelids are closing.

Work, Daniel Eyssette! You must rebuild the hearth — But no, he cannot. The letters of his

book dance before his eyes; then the book turns round, then the table, then the room. To drive away this strange drowsiness, Little What 's-His-Name rises, and walks a few steps; as he reaches the door, he totters and falls to the ground, like a dead weight, overpowered with sleep.

Outside, the sparrows are chirping; the grasshoppers sing at the top of their voices, the bark is peeling off in the sun from the plane-trees, white with dust, that are stretching abroad their thousand branches.

Little What 's-His-Name has a strange dream; it seems to him that somebody is knocking at the door of his room and that a piercing voice calls him by name: "Daniel, Daniel!" He recognizes the voice; it is pitched in the same key in which it used to cry: "Jacques, you are an ass!"

The knocks at the door are redoubled:

"Daniel, Daniel, it is your father; open at once."

Oh, what a dreadful nightmare! Little What 's-His-Name tries to answer, and open the door. He raises himself on his elbow, but his head is too heavy; he falls back and loses consciousness.

When Little What 's-His-Name comes to himself, he is much surprised to find that he is in a very white little bed, hung with ample blue curtains, which make a shade about him. A soft light, a quiet room, and no noise except the ticking of a clock, and the tinkling of a spoon against a china cup. Little What 's-His-Name does not know where he is, but he is very comfortable. The

curtains are pushed aside, and the elder M. Eyssette, holding a cup, bends over him, with a kind smile and his eyes full of tears. Little What 's-His-Name thinks he is still dreaming.

"Is it you, father? Is it really you?"

"Yes, Daniel; yes, my dear child; it is I."

"Then where am I?"

"In the infirmary for a week; now you are well again, but you have been very ill."

"But how is it that you are here, father? Really, as I look at you I seem to be still dreaming."

M. Eyssette kisses him.

"Come, let me cover you up, and be a good boy. The doctor does not want you to talk."

And, to prevent his son from talking, the good man talks incessantly himself.

"Only think, a week ago, the company of wine-merchants sent me to make a circuit in the Cévennes. You may fancy how pleased I was to have an opportunity of seeing you! I arrive at the school; they call you, and look for you — but no Daniel is to be found. I make them take me up to your room; the key is on the inside. I knock; but nobody answers. Then I kick the door open, and find you there on the floor, in a burning fever. Oh, poor child, how ill you have been! Five days of delirium! I have not left you a moment. You were always wandering in your mind, and kept talking of rebuilding the hearth. What hearth did you mean? You cried: 'No keys! Take the keys out of the locks!' You are laughing?

I can assure you that I did not laugh. My God! what nights I went through with you! And can you believe, M. Viot — his name is M. Viot, is n't it? — wanted to prevent my sleeping in the school. He referred to the rules. Oh, yes, the rules, indeed! Did I know anything about his rules? That pedantic fellow thought he could frighten me by jingling his keys under my nose. I put him in his proper place, I can tell you!"

Little What 's-His-Name shuddered at M. Eyssette's audacity; and then, quickly forgetting M. Viot's keys: "Where is my mother?" he asked, stretching out his arms, as if his mother were there, within reach of his caress.

"If you throw off the bedclothes, I shan't tell you anything," answered M. Eyssette in a grieved tone. "There, pull up the blanket again. Your mother is well; she is with your uncle Baptiste."

"And Jacques?"

"Jacques? He is an ass. When I say an ass, you understand, it is only my way of speaking. On the contrary, Jacques is a very good boy. Don't uncover yourself, confound it! He has an excellent position; he is always crying, of course, but he is really extremely contented. His employer has taken him as a secretary, and he has nothing to do except write under dictation. It is a very nice place."

"Then poor Jacques will be condemned to write under somebody's dictation all his life?"

As he says this, Little What 's-His-Name begins to laugh with all his heart, and M. Eyssette laughs

to see him laugh, scolding him all the time, because of that wretched blanket that keeps being pulled out of place.

Oh, blessed infirmary! How many happy hours Little What 's-His-Name spends inside the blue curtains of his bed! M. Eyssette never leaves him; he stays there all day, sitting at the bedside and Little What 's-His-Name would like M. Eyssette never to go away. Alas! that is impossible. The company of wine-merchants needs its commercial traveller. He must leave, and resume his circuit in the Cévennes.

After his father's departure, the boy is alone, quite alone in the silent infirmary. He spends his days in reading, curled up in a big armchair that is rolled near the window. In the morning and evening, the yellow Mme. Cassagne brings him his meals. Little What 's-His-Name drinks the bowl of broth, sucks the wing of a chicken, and says: "Thank you, Madame." Nothing farther. The woman is too suggestive of the fever, and is unpleasing to him; he does not even look at her.

Now, one morning that he has just said his: "Thank you, Madame," as curtly as usual, without lifting his eyes from his book, he is much surprised to hear a very sweet voice say to him: "How are you to-day, Monsieur Daniel?"

Little What 's-His-Name raises his head, and guess what he sees! — the black eyes, the black eyes in person, motionless and smiling in front of him!

"The black eyes in person, motionless and smiling in front of him."

The black eyes inform their friend that the yellow woman is ill, and that they are charged to wait upon him. They look down as they say it is a joy to them to see M. Daniel well again; then they retire with a profound bow, adding that they will return the same evening. The same evening, in fact, they return, and the next morning, too, and again the next evening. Little What's-His-Name is enchanted. He blesses his own illness, the yellow woman's illness, and all the illnesses in the world; if nobody had been ill, he could never have been alone with the black eyes.

Oh, that blessed infirmary! What delightful hours Little What's-His-Name passes in his arm-chair, rolled up to the window! In the morning, under their lashes, the black eyes are filled with clusters of golden sparks glittering in the sun, and in the evening they shine softly and make a starry light in the darkness round them. Little What's-His-Name dreams of the black eyes every night; he can no longer sleep for doing so. At dawn he is already alert, preparing to receive them; he has so many confidences to make them! Then when the black eyes come he says nothing to them.

The black eyes appear to be much astonished by this silence. They come and go in the infirmary, and find a thousand pretexts to stay with the patient, always hoping he will make up his mind to speak; but this ridiculous Little What's-His-Name cannot make up his mind.

Sometimes, however, he arms himself with all

his courage and begins bravely: "Mademoiselle!"

Then the black eyes kindle and look at him smiling. But as he sees them smile thus, the poor fellow loses his head, and adds in a trembling voice: "I thank you for your kindness to me," or again: "The broth was excellent this morning."

Then the black eyes make a pretty little face that means: "What — is that all you have to say?" And they go off with a sigh.

After they have gone, Little What 's-His-Name is in despair.

"Oh! To-morrow, to-morrow I shall speak to them without fail."

And then to-morrow the whole thing is repeated.

Finally, weary of the struggle, and sure that he will never have courage to say what he thinks to the black eyes, Little What 's-His-Name decides to write to them. One evening, he asks for ink and paper for an important letter, oh, very important! The black eyes have doubtless guessed what letter he means, for they are so mischievous, those black eyes. Quick, quick, they run to get ink and paper, place them before the patient, and go off, laughing to themselves.

Little What 's-His-Name begins to write; he writes all night; then, when morning comes, he perceives that this interminable letter contains only three words, you understand; but these three words are the most eloquent in the world, and he is certain of their producing a very great effect.

Look out now! The black eyes are coming.

Little What 's-His-Name is much agitated, he has prepared his letter beforehand, and swears that he will present it at the first opportunity. This is the way it will come to pass. The black eyes will enter, and will put down the broth and chicken on the table. "Good-morning, Monsieur Daniel." Then he will say to her at once, very courageously: "Sweet black eyes, here is a letter for you."

But hush! There is a light step in the corridor. The black eyes are approaching; Little What 's-His-Name holds his letter in his hand. His heart beats; he is going to die.

The door opens — oh, horror!

In the place of the black eyes, appears the old fairy, the terrible fairy in spectacles.

Little What 's-His-Name dares not ask an explanation, but he is in consternation. Why did n't they come? He waits for evening, with impatience. Alas! In the evening, too, the black eyes do not come, nor the next day, nor the day after that, nor ever again.

The black eyes have been dismissed. They have been sent back to the foundling asylum, where they will remain shut up for four years, until they come of age. The black eyes stole sugar!

Farewell, happy days of the infirmary! The black eyes have gone, and to cap the climax of misfortune, the boys are about to return. What, is it already time for the school to be reopened? Oh, how short the holidays have been!

For the first time in six weeks, Little What 's-His-Name goes down to the courtyard, pale, thin, and more of a Little What 's-His-Name than ever. The whole schoolhouse is waking up. They are washing it from garret to cellar, and the corridors are running with water. M. Viot's keys are clashing fiercely as ever, and the terrible M. Viot himself has profited by the vacation to add a few clauses to his list of regulations, and a few keys to his bunch. Little What 's-His-Name must mind his behavior.

Every day more boys are arriving; the whips snap, and the same carriages and wagons that came on the prize day are again seen before the door. A few old boys are missing at the roll-call, but new ones take their places. The divisions are formed anew, and this year, like last, Little What 's-His-Name will have charge of the intermediates. The poor under-master is trembling already, but after all, who knows? the children may not be so bad this year.

The day of the reopening, there is fine music in the chapel. It is the mass of the Holy Spirit; *Veni, creator Spiritus!* Here is the principal, with his handsome black coat and the little silver palm in his button-hole. Behind him is the staff of professors in robes of ceremony; the sciences wear the yellow ermine; the classics, the white ermine. The professor of the second class, who is a dandy, has allowed himself light colored gloves and a fancy hat; M. Viot does not look pleased. *Veni, creator Spiritus!* At the back of the church,

pell-mell among the boys, Little What's-His-Name gazes enviously at the majestic gowns and silver palms. When will he be a professor too, and when will he be able to rebuild the hearth? Alas, before that, how much time and labor still! *Veni, creator Spiritus!* Little What's-His-Name is sad at heart; the organ makes him want to cry. Suddenly, far off, in a corner of the choir, he sees a scarred yet handsome face smiling at him. The smile does Little What's-His-Name good, and after seeing the Abbé Germane again, he is comforted and full of courage. *Veni, creator Spiritus!*

Two days after the mass of the Holy Spirit, there were new solemnities. It was the principal's birthday, and on that day, from time immemorial, the school has celebrated the festival of Saint Théophile by a picnic, with a large supply of cold meats and the wines of Limoux. This time, as usual, the principal spared nothing to add lustre to the little family anniversary that satisfied the generous instincts of his heart without injuring the interests of his school. At dawn, everybody, boys and masters, pile into large wagons, decorated with the municipal colors, and the procession sets out at a gallop, two large vans packed with baskets of food and cases of foaming wine, bringing up the rear. In front, on the first wagon, are the big hats of the band, and the order has been given to play very loud on the wind-instruments. The whips crack, the bells ring, the piles of plates clash against the tin platters. All the people of

Sarlande look out of the window in nightcaps to to see the principal's picnic pass.

The banquet is to take place at the Meadow. As soon as they reach there, the table-cloths are spread on the grass, and the children split their sides laughing, to see the professors sitting on the ground among the violets like little boys. Slices of pasty circulate, corks pop, eyes sparkle. Everybody is talking a great deal, but alone in the midst of the general animation, Little What 's-His-Name appears preoccupied. Suddenly he is seen to blush; the principal has just risen, with a paper in his hand, "Gentlemen, I have this instant received some verses addressed to me by an anonymous poet. It seems that our ordinary Pindar, M. Viot, has a rival this year. Although these verses are rather too flattering to me, I ask permission to read them."

"Yes, yes, read them, read them!" And in his fine prize-day voice, the principal begins to read.

It is a tolerably well-turned compliment, full of pretty rhymes, addressed to the principal and the other gentlemen. There is a posy for each; even the fairy in spectacles is not forgotten. The poet calls her "the angel of the refectory," which is charming.

There is much applause, and a few voices demand the author. Little What 's-His-Name rises, red as a poppy, and bows modestly, amid the general acclamations. Little What 's-His-Name becomes the hero of the occasion; the principal wants to embrace him, and old professors press

his hand with an air of understanding. The teacher of the second class asks for the verses to put them in the newspaper. Little What's-His-Name is very happy; all this incense mounts to his brain with the fumes of the wine of Limoux. Only, and this helps to sober him, he thinks he hears the Abbé Germane muttering the word "Idiot!" and the keys of his rival jingling ferociously.

When the first enthusiasm has abated, the principal claps his hands to enjoin silence.

"Now, Viot, it is your turn; after the playful Muse, the serious Muse."

M. Viot draws gravely from his pocket a bound copybook, big with promise, and begins to read, with a look askance at Little What's-His-Name.

M. Viot's work is an idyl, a Virgilian idyl, in honour of discipline. Two schoolboys, Menalcas and Dorilas answer each other in alternate strophes. Menalcas belongs to a school in which discipline flourishes, and Dorilas to another school from which discipline is banished. Menalcas sings the austere pleasures of severe rules: Dorilas the barren joys of wild liberty.

Dorilas is overthrown in the end, and places the prize of the contest in the hands of the victor, and both boys, joining their voices, intone a joyful song to the glory of discipline.

The poem is finished, and there is the silence of death. During the reading, the children have carried off their plates to the other end of the meadow, and are eating the pasty quietly, very

far away from Menalcas and Dorilas. M. Viot looks at them from where he is, with a bitter smile. The professors have held firm, but not one of them has the courage to applaud. Poor M. Viot! It is a real defeat. The principal tries to console him: "The subject is dry, gentlemen, but the poet has treated it successfully."

"I think it is very beautiful," says Little What's-His-Name shamelessly, for he is already beginning to feel alarmed at his victory.

His baseness is thrown away, however. M. Viot will not be comforted; he bows without answering, and still keeps his bitter smile. He keeps it all day; and on the way home, in the evening, in the midst of the songs of the boys, the crash of the music, and the noise of the wagons rolling over the pavements of the town where all have gone to sleep, Little What's-His-Name hears near him, in the shadow, his rival's keys jingling: "Clink, clank, clink, Master Poet; we'll pay you for this."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BOUCOYRAN AFFAIR.

OUR holidays were buried with the feast of Saint Théophile.

The days that followed were sad; it was like the morning after Shrove Tuesday. Nobody felt in the right mood, neither the masters nor the boys. We were setting to work again, and after two long months of rest, it was with difficulty that the school recovered its wonted movement. The wheels ran badly, like those of an old clock that people had long forgotten to wind. Gradually, however, thanks to M. Viot, everything fell into order. Every day, at the same hour, at the sound of the same bell, the little doors of the court-yards opened, and long lines of children, stiff as wooden soldiers, filed out two by two, under the trees; then the bell rang again, — ding, dong! and the same children passed back through the same little doors. Ding, dong! Get up! Ding, dong! Go to bed. Ding, dong! Study hard. Ding, dong! Have a good time. And so on for the whole year.

O triumph of discipline! How happy the young Menalcas would have been to live under M. Viot's rod, in the model school of Sarlande!

I alone made the shadow in this adorable picture. I could not manage my class. The terrible intermediates had come back from their mountains, uglier, rougher, wilder than ever. On my side, I had become embittered; my illness had made me nervous and irritable, and I could not bear the least thing. The year before I had been too mild; this year I was too severe. I hoped thus to subdue these troublesome boys, and for the least prank I overwhelmed the whole class with extra tasks, and kept them in after hours.

This system was not successful. My punishments, by dint of being lavished, depreciated in value, and fell as low as the paper money of the year IV. One day, I felt myself overpowered. My class was in open revolt, and I had no more ammunition with which to make head against the insurrection. I can still see myself at my desk, struggling like mad, in the midst of cries, tears, groans, and hisses: "Get out of the room! — Be off with you! — Sss! Sss! — No more tyrants! — You are unjust!" And the inkstands were flying, and paper balls were hitting against my desk, and all these little monsters, under pretence of remonstrance, were hanging on to my seat in clusters, yelling like baboons.

Sometimes, despairing of my cause, I called in M. Viot to my assistance. Think what a humiliation! Ever since the festival of Saint-Théophile, the man with the keys had been severe with me, and I knew that he took pleasure in my distress. When he entered the class-room abruptly, carrying

his keys, it was like a stone thrown into a frog-pond: in the twinkling of an eye all the boys were back in their places, bending over their books. One might have heard a pin drop. M. Viot walked up and down a moment, shaking his bunch of keys, in the midst of profound silence; then he looked at me ironically, and retired without speaking.

I was very unhappy. My colleagues, the masters, made fun of me. The principal, when I met him, was short in his manners to me, and I was sure that M. Viot had had a hand in that. To crown all, the Boucoyran affair occurred.

Oh, that Boucoyran affair! I am sure that it remained in the annals of the school, and that the people of Sarlande are still talking about it. I, too, should like to talk about this terrible business. It is time for the public to know the truth of it.

A boy of fifteen, with big feet, big eyes, big hands, no forehead, and the manners of a farm-servant, — such was the Marquis de Boucoyran, the terror of the court of intermediates, and sole specimen of the nobility of Cévennes at the school of Sarlande. The principal thought a great deal of this boy, on account of the aristocratic lustre his presence lent the establishment. In the school he was always called "the Marquis." Everybody was afraid of him; I, too, was influenced by the general opinion, and spoke to him only with circumspection.

For some time we lived on rather good terms.

It is true that the Marquis had, now and then,

an impertinent way of looking at me, or answering me, that was suggestive of the Old Régime, but I pretended not to notice it, knowing that I had a powerful adversary to deal with.

One day, however, that rascal of a Marquis undertook to answer me, before all the class with such insolence that I lost all patience.

"Monsieur de Boucoyran," said I, trying to keep cool, "take your books, and leave the room immediately."

This was an assertion of authority the rogue had never heard of before. He remained dumbfounded, and stared at me with wide-open eyes, without moving from his place.

I saw that I was involved in a bad business, but I had gone too far to retreat.

"Go out, Monsieur de Boucoyran!" I again commanded.

The boys waited anxiously. For the first time, there was silence in the class.

At my second injunction, the Marquis, who had recovered from his surprise, replied with an air that I wish you could have seen:

"I will not go out."

A murmur of admiration ran through the room. Indignant, I rose from my seat.

"You will not go out, sir? We shall see about that."

And I came down.

God is my witness that at that moment I was far from all idea of violence; I wished simply to intimidate the Marquis by the firmness of my atti-

tude; but, as he saw me descend from my desk, he began to laugh so scornfully, that I made a gesture, as if to seize him by the collar and pull him out of his seat.

The wretch held an enormous iron ruler concealed under his coat. I had scarcely raised my hand when he dealt me a terrible blow on the arm that made me scream with pain.

All the boys clapped their hands.

"Bravo, Marquis!"

For the moment I lost my head. With one bound I was on the table, with another, on the Marquis; and then, taking him by the throat, I used my feet, fists, and teeth to such advantage, that I tore him from his place and sent him rolling from the class-room, out into the middle of the court. The whole thing lasted but an instant; I should never have thought I had so much strength.

The boys were in consternation. No one cried now: "Bravo, Marquis!" They were afraid. Boucoyran, the strongest of the strong, brought to his senses by the poor, mean little under-master! What an extraordinary thing! I had gained in authority what the Marquis had lost in influence.

When I went up to my seat again, still pale and trembling with emotion, all the boys bowed their faces quickly over their desks. The class was subjugated. But what would the principal and M. Viot think of this occurrence? What? I had dared to lift my hand against one of the boys, against the Marquis de Boucoyran, against the one

noble of the school! I must have wanted to get myself discharged then.

These reflections, which came somewhat late, troubled my triumph slightly. I was frightened in my turn. I said to myself: "It is certain that the Marquis has gone to complain." And, from one minute to another, I expected to see the principal enter. I trembled until the end of the study-hour; still, nobody came.

At the recess I was much astonished to see Boucoyran laughing and playing with the others. This reassured me a little; and as the day passed without anything farther happening, I imagined that the rascal would keep quiet, and I should be rid of the affair at the cost of a good fright.

Unfortunately, the Thursday following was a holiday. In the evening the Marquis did not return to the dormitory. I felt a kind of presentiment, and could not sleep all night.

The next day, during the first study-hour, the boys whispered and looked at Boucoyran's empty place. Though I did not show it, I was dying of anxiety. Toward seven o'clock the door opened abruptly. All the boys rose.

I was lost.

The principal entered first, then M. Viot behind him, and finally a tall old man, buttoned up to the chin in a long overcoat, with a stiff collar, four inches high, round his neck. This person I did not know, but I understood at once that it was M. de Boucoyran, senior. He was twisting his long moustache and muttering between his teeth.

I had not even the courage to come down from my desk to greet these gentlemen; nor did they bow to me as they entered. All three took up a position in the middle of the class-room and did not look once in my direction until they went out again.

It was the principal who opened fire.

"Gentlemen," said he, addressing the boys, "we come here to fulfil a painful, a very painful mission. One of your masters has been guilty of so grave a fault that it is our duty to pronounce censure upon him in public."

Thereupon, he proceeded to pronounce censure for at least more than fifteen minutes. All the facts of the case were distorted; the Marquis was the best boy in the school; I had treated him brutally, without reason, without excuse. In short, I had failed in every duty.

What could I reply to these accusations?

From time to time I attempted to defend myself: "Excuse me, sir;" but the principal would not hear me, he pronounced his censure to the very end.

After him, M. de Boucoyran, senior, spoke, and how? It was like the charge against a prisoner. Unhappy father! Somebody had almost murdered his child. Somebody had fallen on this poor little defenceless being, like — like — how should he describe it? like a buffalo, like a wild buffalo. The child had been in bed for two days, and for two days his mother had been watching in tears by his bedside.

Ah, if there were a man to deal with, he, M. de Boucoyran, senior, would have undertaken to avenge his child! But it was nobody but a little wretch whom he despised. Only let that Person understand once for all that, if He ever touched a hair of the boy's head again His ears would be cut short for him.

During this beautiful speech, the boys were laughing in their sleeve, and M. Viot's keys were fluttering with pleasure. Standing up at his desk, pale with rage, the poor Person in question was listening to all these insults, and gulping down these humiliations, very careful not to answer. If He had answered, He would have been dismissed from the school, and then what place was there to go to?

At last, at the end of an hour, when their flow of eloquence was exhausted, the three gentlemen retired. After their departure, there was a great tumult in the school-room. I tried, but in vain, to obtain a little silence; the children laughed in my face. The Boucoyran affair had put the finishing stroke to my authority.

Oh, it was a terrible business! All the town was excited by it. At both the Great Club and the Small Club, at the cafés, among the members of the band, nothing else was talked of. Those who were well informed gave details that made one's hair stand on end. It seemed that this under-master was a monster, an ogre. He had tortured the child with refined and unheard-of cruelty. Whenever he was mentioned he was called "the executioner."

When young Boucoyran grew tired of staying in bed, his parents installed him upon the sofa, in the most conspicuous position in their drawing-room, and for a week there was an interminable procession through this room. The interesting victim was the universal object of attention.

Twenty times consecutively, they made him relate his story, and every time the wretch invented some new detail. The mothers shuddered; the old maids called him "a poor angel," and slipped sugar-plums into his hand. The journal of the opposition profited by the event to thunder against the school in a terrible article intended for the advantage of a religious establishment in the neighborhood.

The principal was furious and, if he did not dismiss me, it was due to the protection of the rector. Alas, it would have been better for me to be sent off at once! My life in the school had become impossible. The boys would no longer listen to me; at the least word, they threatened to do as Boucoyran had done, and to go to complain to their fathers. I ended by paying no further attention to them.

Through all this, I had a fixed idea, and that was to revenge myself on the Boucoyrans. I kept constantly seeing the insolent face of the old Marquis and my ears still burnt with the threat he had made them. Moreover, if I had wished to forget these insults, I could not have succeeded in doing so; for, twice a week, on the days of our walks, as the boys passed in front of the café by

the Bishop's palace, I was sure to find M. de Boucoyran, senior, planted before the door, in the midst of a group of officers from the garrison, all of them bareheaded and carrying billiard cues in their hands. They watched us coming from a distance, with jeering laughter; then, when my division was within reach of the voice, the Marquis cried very loud, scrutinizing me with a challenging glance: "Good afternoon, Boucoyran."

"Good afternoon, father," yelped the odious boy from among the ranks; and the officers, schoolboys, café-waiters, and everybody else laughed.

The "Good afternoon, Boucoyran," had become a torture to me, and there was no means of escaping from it. To go to the Meadow, it was absolutely necessary to pass in front of the café by the Bishop's palace, and my persecutor never once missed being at the appointed place.

Sometimes I felt a mad desire to go up to him and challenge him; but I was deterred by two reasons; first, the constant fear of being discharged, and then the sword of the Marquis, a devilish big rapier that had made so many victims when he was in the life-guards.

However, one day, maddened to the last degree, I went to find Roger, the fencing-master, and point-blank declared to him my resolution to measure myself against the Marquis. Roger, to whom I had not spoken for a long time, listened to me with a certain reserve; but when I had done, he pressed both my hands warmly in a burst of feeling.

"Bravo, Monsieur Daniel! I knew all the time that, with that air of yours, you could not be a spy. Then why the deuce were you always in league with your M. Viot? At last I understand you, and all is forgotten. Give me your hand, you are a noble fellow! Now, as to your affair; you have been insulted? Good. You want to get reparation for it? Very good. You do not know the first thing about fencing? Good, good; very good, very good. You want me to prevent your being run through by that old fool? All right! Come to the fencing-hall and in six months it is you who will run him through."

I blushed with pleasure when I heard the kind Roger espouse my quarrel with so much ardor. We agreed about the lessons; three hours a week; we agreed also upon the price, which was to be altogether exceptional. (Exceptional in fact! I learned later that he made me pay twice as much as the others.) When all these compacts were settled, Roger passed his arm familiarly through mine.

"Monsieur Daniel," said he, "it is too late today for our first lesson; but we can go and conclude our bargain at the Café Barbette. Come along, don't be a baby! Can it be, by any chance, that you are afraid of the Café Barbette? Come on, confound you, and leave that hotbed of pedants for a little while. You will find friends over there, good fellows, by all that's holy! Noble fellows, and with them, you will soon get over those old woman's ways that do you wrong."

Alas! I yielded to the temptation, and we went to the Café Barbette. It was the same as ever, full of shouts, smoke, and red pantaloons; the same shakoes, and the same sword-belts hanging on the same pegs.

Roger's friends received me with open arms. He was right, they were all noble fellows. When they heard my story of the Marquis, and the resolution I had taken, they came up, one after another, to shake hands with me: "Bravo, young man. You are all right."

I, too, was a noble fellow. I ordered punch, we drank to my triumph, and it was decided among the noble fellows that I should kill the Marquis de Boucoyran at the end of the school year.

CHAPTER X.

EVIL DAYS.

WINTER had come, a dry, terrible, black, winter, such as they have up there among the mountains. The court-yards of the school were sad to see, with their great leafless trees, and the ground frozen harder than a stone. We got up before day, by lamplight; it was cold; there was ice in the basins. The boys were never ready in time; the bell had to be rung repeatedly for them. "Make haste, gentlemen!" cried the masters, walking up and down to keep warm. The ranks were formed in silence, somehow or other, and we went down the great stairway, dimly lighted, and through the long corridors where the deadly winter winds were whistling.

A bad winter for Little What's-His-Name.

I worked no longer. During the study-hour, the unwholesome heat of the stove made me sleep, and while the recitations were going on, as my room in the attic was too cold for me, I flew to shut myself up in the Café Barbette, and never left it until the last moment. It was there that Roger now gave me his lessons; the severity of the weather had driven us from the fencing-hall, and we fenced in the middle of the café with billiard

cues, drinking punch. The non-commissioned officers passed judgment on the strokes; all those noble fellows had decidedly admitted me to their intimacy, and taught me daily some new infallible thrust for killing the poor Marquis de Boucoyran. They taught me how to sweeten absinthe, and when they played billiards, it was I who marked the points for them.

A bad winter for Little What 's-His-Name.

One morning of that sad winter, as I entered the Café Barbette, — I can still hear the click of the billiard balls, and the puffing of the big china stove, — Roger rushed toward me, saying: "A few words with you, Monsieur Daniel!" and dragged me into a back room, with a very mysterious air.

A lover's confidence was the point in question. You may fancy whether I was proud of receiving confidences from a man of his figure. It seemed to make me grow taller. Here is the story. This swaggering fencing-master had met in the town, in a certain place that he could not name, a certain person with whom he had fallen madly in love. This person occupied at Sarlande, a position that was so lofty, — h'm, h'm, you understand, — so extraordinary, that the fencing-master was still wondering how he had dared lift his eyes so high. And yet, in spite of this person's position, — a position so lofty, so, etc., — he did not despair of being loved in return, and even thought the moment had come for hazarding some epistolary declarations. Unfortunately, fencing-masters are not very proficient in exercises of the pen. It would

have been one thing to write to a grisette; but with a person in a position that was so, etc., a bar-room style would not be acceptable, and even a good poet would not be thrown away.

"I see what you want," said Little What's-His-Name, with a knowing air; "you need some one to turn out a few polite love-letters for you to send the lady, and you thought of me."

"That's just it," answered the fencing-master.

"Very well, I am your man, and we can begin whenever you wish; only, you must give me some description of the lady, so that our letters may not seem to be taken out of the *Letter Writer's Manual.*"

The fencing-master looked round distrustfully, and then said to me, in a whisper, cramming his moustaches into my ear:

"She is a Parisian blonde, and smells as sweet as a flower. Her name is Cecilia."

He could make no farther confidences on account of the lady's position, — a position that was so, etc., — but these details were enough for me, and that same evening, during the study-hour, I wrote my first letter to the blonde Cecilia.

This strange correspondence between Little What's-His-Name and this mysterious person lasted about a month. For a month I wrote, on an average, two passionate letters a day. Some of these letters were tender and ethereal as Elvira's Lamartine, and others were as ardent and full of fury as Sophie's Mirabeau. There were some that began with the words: "O Cecilia, sometimes on

a wild cliff," and ended with these: "They say that one may die of it — let us try!" Then, from time to time, the Muse had a hand in them:

> "Oh, those burning lips of thine,
> Press, oh! press them close to mine!"

To-day, I laugh when I speak of it; but at that time Little What's-His-Name did not laugh, I can tell you, and it was all done very seriously. When I had finished a letter, I gave it to Roger for him to copy in his handsome, non-commissioned officer's hand; and, on his side, as soon as he received the answers (for the poor woman answered him), he brought them at once to me, and I based my operations upon them.

The game pleased me on the whole, perhaps even pleased me too much. The invisible blonde, perfumed like a white lilac, never left my thoughts. At times I imagined that I was writing on my own account; I filled my letters with confidences that were entirely personal, with curses against destiny, and the vile and malicious beings among whom I was obliged to live. "O Cecilia! If you knew how much I need your love!"

Sometimes, too, when the strapping Roger said to me twirling his moustache: "That's just right; keep on," I felt a secret impulse of vexation, and thought to myself: "How can she believe it is that big roistering braggart who writes her these masterpieces of passion and melancholy?"

She believed it, however, believed it so implicitly, that one day, the fencing-master, triumphant,

came to bring me the reply he had just received: "At nine, this evening, behind the sub-prefecture."

Was it to the eloquence of my letters or to the length of his moustaches that Roger owed his success? I leave the trouble of deciding with you, ladies. It is nevertheless true that on that night, in his melancholy room, Little What's-His-Name had very restless slumbers. He dreamt that he was tall, and had moustaches, and that Parisian ladies, occupying very extraordinary positions, made appointments to meet him behind sub-prefectures.

The most amusing thing of all is that on the next day I was obliged to write a letter of gratitude, and thank Cecilia for all the happiness she had given me. "Angel, who consented to pass one night upon earth."

Little What's-His-Name wrote this letter, I confess, with rage in his heart. Fortunately the correspondence stopped there, and for some time I heard nothing more said of Cecilia or of her lofty position.

CHAPTER XI.

MY GOOD FRIEND THE FENCING-MASTER.

ON the 18th of February, as much snow had fallen during the night, the children were not able to play in the courts. Therefore, as soon as the morning study-hour was over, they were shut in *the hall*, to amuse themselves, under shelter from the bad weather, while waiting for recitations.

I was superintending them.

What they called *the hall* was the old gymnasium of the naval academy. Imagine four high bare walls, with little grated windows; here and there iron cramps half torn out, traces of ladders still visible, and, dangling from the main beam of the ceiling, an enormous iron ring at the end of a rope.

The children seemed to be having a very good time there. They ran noisily all round the hall, making the dust rise. Some of them tried to reach the ring; others hung suspended by their hands, shouting; five or six, of a calmer disposition, were eating their bread in front of the windows, looking at the snow that filled the streets, and at the men armed with shovels, who were carrying it away in carts. But I heard nothing of all the racket.

Alone in a corner with tears in my eyes, I was reading a letter, and the boys at that moment might have demolished the gymnasium from top to bottom, without my observing it. It was a letter from Jacques that I had just received; it was postmarked Paris, ah, yes, Paris! — and this is what it said:

DEAR DANIEL, — My letter will surprise you. You have n't guessed, have you, my being in Paris for the last two weeks? I left Lyons without telling anybody, or asking advice. Don't blame me; I was too tired of that horrible town, especially since your departure.

I arrived here with thirty francs, and five or six letters from the curé of Saint Nizier. Fortunately, Providence took care of me from the beginning, and made me fall in with an old Marquis, who engaged me as secretary.

We are putting his memoirs in order; all I have to do is to write under his dictation, and I get a hundred francs a month for it. It is not brilliant, as you see; but, everything considered, I hope to be able to send some of my savings home occasionally.

O my dear Daniel! What a pretty city Paris is! Here, at least, it is not always foggy; of course it rains sometimes, but it is a light, cheerful rain, mixed with sunshine, such as I have never seen elsewhere, so I have completely changed; if you only knew! I do not cry any more, it is incredible.

I had come to this point in the letter, when suddenly, under the windows, there was the dull sound of a carriage rumbling through the snow. The carriage stopped before the door of the

school, and I heard the children shouting at the top of their lungs: "The sub-prefect! The sub-prefect!"

A visit from the sub-prefect evidently foretold something unusual. He came scarcely two or three times a year to the school of Sarlande, and then it was an event. But at that moment my brother Jacques' letter interested me above everything else, and meant more to me than the sub-prefect of Sarlande, and than all Sarlande itself. So, while the boys, who were in high spirits, were falling over one another in front of the windows in their eagerness to see the sub-prefect get out of his carriage, I returned to my corner and began again to read:

You must know, my dear Daniel, that our father is in Brittany, where he is doing business in cider, in behalf of a company. When he learned that I was the secretary of a Marquis, he wanted me to make him buy a few casks of cider, but, unluckily, the Marquis drinks nothing but wine, and Spanish wine at that. I wrote this to my father, and do you know what he answered? "Jacques, you are an ass!" as usual. But all the same, my dear Daniel, I believe that at the bottom he is very fond of me.

As to mamma, you know that she is alone now. You ought to write to her, for she complains of your silence.

I had forgotten to tell you something, which will certainly give you great pleasure. I have a room in the Latin Quarter — in the Latin Quarter, only think of it! A real poet's room like one in a novel, with a little window and house-tops as far as the eye can see. The bed is

narrow, but we could both sleep in it at a pinch; and then there is a work-table in the corner where a fellow could write verses very comfortably.

I am sure that if you saw all this, you would come to me as soon as possible; I, too, should like to have you with me, and I do not promise not to ask you to come some day.

In the meantime, don't forget me, and don't work too much at school lest it make you ill. Good-by,

Your affectionate brother,

JACQUES.

Dear kind Jacques! What delicious pain his letter gave me. I laughed and cried at the same time. All my life of the last months, the punch, the billiards, and the Café Barbette, made the effect upon me of a bad dream, and I thought: "Come, that's all over; now I am going to work. I am going to be brave like Jacques."

Just then the bell rang. The boys fell into line; they talked much of the sub-prefect and, as they passed, called one another's attention to his carriage standing before the door. I gave them into the charge of the professors, and then, once rid of them, rushed to the staircase, I longed so greatly to be alone in my room with my brother Jacques' letter.

"Monsieur Daniel, the principal is waiting to see you."

The principal? What could the principal have to say to me? The porter looked strangely at me. Suddenly, the idea of the sub-prefect returned to me. "Is the sub-prefect up there?" I asked.

And, my heart palpitating with hope, I began to run up the stairs at full speed.

There are days when one seems to be crazy. When I learned that the sub-prefect was waiting for me, do you know what I imagined? I imagined that he had noticed my attractive appearance on prize day, and had come to the school expressly to propose taking me as his secretary. This seemed to me the most natural thing in the world. Jacques' letter, with the story of the old Marquis had surely muddled my brain.

However that may be, the farther I reached on my way upstairs, the greater became my certainty. Secretary to the sub-prefect! I was beside myself with joy.

In passing through the hall I met Roger. He was very pale, and looked as if he wanted to speak to me, but I did not stop; the sub-prefect could not spare the time to wait. When I came to the principal's study, my heart was beating very hard, I assure you. Secretary to the sub-prefect! I had to stop a moment to recover my breath; I readjusted my cravat, gave a little twist to my hair with my fingers and turned the door-knob softly.

If I had only known what was awaiting me!

The sub-prefect was leaning negligently against the marble mantelpiece, smiling between his blond whiskers. The principal, in his dressing-gown, stood humbly near him, his velvet cap in his hand, and M. Viot, called in haste, was hiding in the corner.

Upon my entrance, the sub-prefect began to speak.

"It is this gentleman, then," said he, with a gesture toward me, "who amuses himself by seducing our lady's-maids?"

He pronounced these words in a clear ironical voice, smiling all the time. I thought at first that he was joking, and did not answer, but the sub-prefect was not joking, and after a moment's silence, he resumed, still smiling: —

"Have not I the honor of speaking to Monsieur Daniel Eyssette, — to Monsieur Daniel Eyssette, who has seduced my wife's maid?"

I did not know what he was talking about, but when I heard the word lady's-maid, flung thus a second time in my face, I felt myself growing red with shame, and it was with genuine indignation that I cried:

"What lady's-maid? I have never seduced a lady's-maid."

At this reply I saw a flash of scorn gleaming from the principal's spectacles, and I heard the keys in the corner muttering: "What effrontery!"

But the sub-prefect never stopped smiling; he took from the mantelpiece a little package of papers that I had not noticed at first, and then, turning toward me, carelessly shaking them in his hand, said: — "Here is some very grave testimony against you. These are the letters found with the young woman in question. It is true, on the one hand that they are not signed, and that the maid refused to name anybody. Only, in the letters,

much is said about the school, and, unfortunately for you, M. Viot has recognized your writing and your style."

Here the keys jingled fiercely, and the sub-prefect added, still smiling:

"Everybody is not a poet at the school of Sarlande."

At these words, a sudden idea passed through my brain; I wanted to have a near look at the papers. I rushed forward; the principal feared a scene, and made as if to hold me back. But the sub-prefect quietly held out the bundle to me.

"Look at them," he said.

Mercy! It was my correspondence with Cecilia.

All the letters were there, all! From the one that began: "O Cecilia! Sometimes on a wild cliff" down to the psalm of thanksgiving: "Angel who consented to pass a night upon earth." And to think that I had stripped the leaves from all these beautiful flowers of amatory rhetoric to cast them at the feet of a lady's-maid! To think that this person, in a situation so lofty, — so, etc., brushed off the boots of the sub-prefect every morning! You can fancy my rage and confusion.

"Well, what have you to say about it, Sir Don Juan?" sneered the sub-prefect, after a moment's silence. "Are these letters yours or not?"

Instead of answering, I bowed my head. A word would have exculpated me; but I would not say that word. I was ready to suffer all rather than denounce Roger; for, please remark that in

the midst of this catastrophe, Little What's-His-Name did not for one instant suspect the loyalty of his friend. On recognizing the letters he thought immediately: "Roger must have been too lazy to copy them; he preferred to play billiards and send mine." What an innocent was Little What's-His-Name!

When the sub-prefect saw that I would not answer, he put the letters back into his pocket, and, turning toward the principal and his acolyte, said: "Now, gentlemen, you know what there remains for you to do."

Thereupon, M. Viot's keys fluttered lugubriously; and the principal answered, bowing to the ground "that M. Eyssette deserved to be sent away on the spot, but that, in order to avoid a scandal, they would keep him another week." Just time enough to engage a new master.

At the terrible word "sent away," all my courage left me. I bowed without speaking, and hurriedly left the room, I was hardly out of it when I burst into tears. I ran straight to my room, stifling my sobs in my handkerchief.

Roger was waiting for me; he looked anxious, and was striding up and down.

As he saw me enter, he came toward me.

"Monsieur Daniel," said he with a questioning glance. I let myself fall into a chair without answering.

"Tears and babyishness!" continued the fencing-master roughly; "all that proves nothing. Come, quick! What has happened?"

Then I related in detail the whole of the horrible scene in the study.

As I went on speaking, I saw Roger's face brighten; he no longer looked at me so haughtily, and, at the end, when he heard I had allowed myself to be sent away from the school rather than betray him, he held out both hands to me, and said simply: "Daniel, you are a noble fellow." Just then we heard a carriage roll through the street; it was the sub-prefect going away.

"You are a noble fellow," repeated my good friend the fencing-master, squeezing my wrists till he nearly broke them; "you are a noble fellow, that is all I can say. But you ought to understand that I cannot allow any man to sacrifice himself for me."

As he spoke, he had drawn near to the door.

"Don't cry, Monsieur Daniel. I am going to see the principal, and I swear that it is not you who will be sent away."

He made another step to go; then, coming back to me, as if he had forgotten something, he said in a low voice:

"Only listen to this before I go. Your tall friend Roger is not alone in the world; he has an infirm mother in a corner somewhere. A mother! Poor sainted woman! Promise me to write her when all is over."

He said this gravely and quietly, in a tone that frightened me.

"What do you mean to do?" I cried.

Roger made no answer; he only half opened

his waistcoat and let me see the polished butt of a pistol in his pocket.

I rushed toward him, much moved.

"What, kill yourself, poor wretch? You want to kill yourself?"

He answered very coldly:

"My dear fellow, when I was in the service, I promised myself that, if ever I should be disgraced through any rashness of my own, I should not survive my dishonor. The time has come to keep my word. In five minutes I shall be sent away from the school, that is to say, disgraced; an hour afterwards, good-evening; I shall blow out my brains."

On hearing this, I planted myself resolutely in front of the door.

"No, Roger; you shall not go. I should rather lose my place than be the cause of your death."

"Let me do my duty," said he fiercely, and, in spite of my efforts, he succeeded in partly opening the door.

Then, it came into my mind to speak to him of his mother, of the poor mother he had in a corner somewhere. I proved to him that he ought to live for her, that I could easily find another place, and that, besides, at all events, we had still a week ahead of us, and that the least he could do was to wait until the last moment before coming to so terrible a decision. This last reflection seemed to touch him. He consented to delay for a few hours his visit to the principal and what was to follow: Meanwhile, the bell rang; we shook hands and I went down to the school-room.

What creatures we are! I had entered my room in despair, and I left it almost happy. Little What's-His-Name was so proud of having saved the life of his good friend the fencing-master.

Nevertheless, I must acknowledge that when I was once seated in my armchair, and the first glow of enthusiasm had passed, I began to reflect. Roger had consented to live, and that was a good thing; but what was to become of me after my noble devotion should have turned me out of the school?

The situation was not cheerful; I saw the rebuilding of the hearth already singularly compromised, my mother in tears, and my father in a passion. Fortunately, I thought of Jacques; how lucky it was that his letter had arrived precisely on that morning. It was all easy, after all, for had not he written me that there was room for two in his bed? Besides, it is always possible to find something to live on in Paris.

Here a horrible thought stopped me: I needed money for going away; first, for my railway ticket, then fifty-eight francs I owed the porter, ten francs that I had borrowed from one of the older boys, and also enormous sums inscribed opposite my name on the account-book of the Café Barbette. How should I procure all this money?

"Pooh!" said I to myself, as I thought it over, "I am very foolish to bother over such a small thing: is n't Roger here? Roger is rich; he gives lessons in town, and will be only too glad to obtain a few hundred francs for me, who have just saved his life."

My affairs thus settled, I forgot all the catastrophes of the day in thinking only of my great journey to Paris. I was very happy, caring no more about losing my place; and M. Viot, who came down to the school-room to enjoy my despair, looked much disappointed when he saw my joyous face. At dinner, I ate much and fast; in the court I let the boys off their punishment. At last the recitation-bell rang.

The most pressing thing was to see Roger; with one bound I reached his room, but nobody was there. "Very well," I said to myself; "he must have gone over to the Café Barbette," and in such dramatic circumstances this caused me no surprise.

At the Café Barbette, too, I found nobody. "Roger," they told me, "had gone off to the Meadow with the non-commissioned officers." What the devil could they be doing there in such weather? I began to be extremely uneasy, so, refusing an invitation to play billiards, I turned up my trousers at the bottom, and rushed out into the snow, in the direction of the Meadow, to look for my good friend the fencing-master.

CHAPTER XII.

THE IRON RING.

It is a good mile and a quarter from the gates of Sarlande to the Meadow; but, at the rate at which I was going, on that day, I covered the ground in less than a quarter of an hour. I trembled for Roger. I feared lest the poor fellow, in spite of his promise, might have told everything to the principal during the study-hour; it seemed to me that I still saw the butt of his pistol shine. This lugubrious thought lent me wings.

However, as I went along, I could see in the snow the trace of numerous footsteps going toward the Meadow, and it reassured me somewhat to think that the fencing-master was not alone.

Then, slackening my pace, I thought of Paris, Jacques, and my departure. But, after a minute, my terrors began again.

"Roger is evidently going to kill himself. Why otherwise should he come to this deserted place, far from the town? If he has taken his friends from the Café Barbette with him, it must be to say good-by to them, to drink the stirrup-cup, as they say. Oh, those soldiers!" And I set off again at breathless speed.

Luckily, I was approaching the Meadow, and could already see the tall trees laden with snow. "My poor friend," said I to myself, "if I only arrive in time!"

The footsteps led me thus as far as a public-house known as the Espéron.

This public-house was a suspicious place of bad reputation, where the rakes of Sarlande had their pleasure-parties. I had been there more than once in the company of the noble fellows, but I had never thought its appearance so sinister as on that day. Yellow and dirty, in the midst of the immaculate whiteness of the plain, with its low door, ruinous walls and ill-washed window-panes, it was skulking behind a grove of small elms. The little house looked ashamed of its ugly trade.

As I approached, I heard a merry noise of voices, laughter, and the clash of glasses.

"Good God," thought I, with a shudder, "it is the stirrup-cup." And I stopped to take breath.

I had reached the back of the public-house; I pushed open the latticed door, and entered the garden. What a garden! A big bare hedge, clumps of leafless lilac bushes, heaps of refuse lying on the snow, and white arbors that looked like Esquimaux' huts. It was dreary enough to make one cry.

The racket came from a room on the ground-floor, and the men must have grown hot from drinking, for, in spite of the cold, they had opened both windows wide.

I had already put my foot on the first step,

when I heard something that stopped me short and made my blood run cold; it was my own name pronounced amid great bursts of laughter. Roger was speaking of me, and, strange to say, every time the name Daniel Eyssette recurred, the others laughed to split their sides.

Impelled by a painful curiosity, and feeling sure that I was about to learn something extraordinary, I drew back, and without being heard by anybody, thanks to the snow, which, like a carpet, deadened the sound of my steps, I slipped into one of the arbors, that was conveniently situated, right underneath the windows.

I shall see that arbor all my life long; I shall see all my life the green mould that lined it, its untidy, muddy floor, its little green-painted table, and its wooden benches dripping with water. The light hardly penetrated through the snow that was piled upon the roof and, slowly melting, fell drop by drop on my head.

It was there, there in that arbor, dark and cold as a tomb, that I learned how wicked and base men can be; it was there I learned to doubt, scorn and hate. You that read, God forbid that you should ever enter that arbor! I stood upright, holding my breath, and, red with anger and shame, listened to what they were saying at the Espéron.

My good friend the fencing-master, was addressing the others. He related the adventure of Cecilia, the story of the love-letters, the visit of the sub-prefect to the school, with embellishments

"I slipped into one of the arbors, underneath the windows."

and gestures, to judge from the transports of his audience.

"You understand, my little loves," said he in his jeering tone, "it was not for nothing that I acted comedy for three years at the Zouave theatre. As true as I tell you, I believed for one moment that the game was lost, and I thought I should never come again to drink old Espéron's good wine with you. Little Eyssette had told nothing, it is true; but there was still time for him to speak; and, between ourselves, I believe he wanted only to leave me the honor of denouncing myself. So I said: 'Look sharp, Roger, and bring on the grand scene.'"

Thereupon my good friend the fencing-master, began to act what he called the grand scene, that is to say what had passed between him and me in my room in the morning. Ah, the wretch! He forgot nothing. He cried: "My mother, my poor mother!" with a theatrical intonation, and then imitated my voice: "No, Roger, no, you shall not go!" The grand scene was really comic in the highest degree, and all the audience rolled in their chairs with laughing. As to me, I felt the big tears running down my cheeks; I shivered and my ears rang. I divined all the odious comedy of the morning, and vaguely understood that Roger had purposely sent my letters so as to protect himself against any mishap; that his mother, his poor mother, had been dead for twenty years; and that I had taken his pipe-case for the butt-end of a pistol.

"And how about the lovely Cecilia?" asked one of the noble fellows.

"Cecilia told no tales; she packed her trunks, for she is a good girl."

"And little Daniel? What will become of him?"

"Bah!" answered Roger.

Here there was a gesture that made everybody laugh.

This burst of laughter put me beside myself. I wanted to come out of the arbor and appear suddenly in the midst of them like a spectre. But I contained myself: I had already been ridiculous enough.

The roast was brought in, and they clinked glasses.

"Here 's to Roger! To Roger!" they cried.

I could stand it no longer, I was too miserable. Without troubling myself lest I should be seen, I rushed through the garden, cleared the latticed gate at a bound, and began to run straight ahead like a madman.

Night was silently falling, and in the dusk of the twilight, the immense field of snow took on an indescribable aspect of profound melancholy.

I ran thus for some time like a wounded deer; and if hearts that break and bleed were anything except expressions used by poets, I swear that a long trail of blood might have been found behind me on the white plain.

I knew I was ruined. How should I get money? How should I go away? How should I

reach my brother Jacques? It would not help me to denounce Roger; he could deny everything, now that Cecilia was gone.

At last, exhausted and overpowered by fatigue and grief, I let myself fall down in the snow at the foot of a chestnut tree. I might have stayed there till next day, perhaps, crying, and without power to think, when all at once, very, very far away, in Sarlande, I heard a bell ring. It was the school bell. I had forgotten everything, but this bell called me back to life: I had to return and superintend the boy's play-hour in the *hall*. In thinking of the *hall*, a sudden idea struck me. My tears stopped immediately, and I felt stronger and calmer. I rose, and, with the deliberate step of a man who has just made an irrevocable decision, continued my way to Sarlande.

If you care to know the irrevocable decision Little What 's-His-Name had made, follow him to Sarlande across the great white plain; follow him through the sombre, muddy streets of the town; follow him into the vestibule of the school; follow him into the *hall* during the play-hour, and remark with what singular persistence he stares at the big iron ring suspended in the middle of the room; and when the play-hour is over, follow him to the school-room, go up the steps to his seat with him, and read over his shoulder this painful letter that he is engaged in writing, in the midst of the hubbub raised by the noisy children:

MONSIEUR JACQUES EYSSETTE,
RUE BONAPARTE, PARIS:

Forgive me, my beloved Jacques, the sorrow I cause you. You, who no longer weep, I am about to make weep again; but it will be the last time, I promise you. When you receive this letter your poor Daniel will be dead.

Here the uproar in the school-room is redoubled; Little What 's-His-Name stops to distribute a few penalties right and left, gravely and without anger. Then he continues:

Do you see, Jacques, I was too miserable. I could not do otherwise than kill myself. My future is ruined; I am driven away from the school, — it is a story about a woman, too long to tell you; then I am in debt; I no longer know how to work; I am ashamed, I am weary, disgusted, and life terrifies me. I should rather go.

Little What 's-His-Name is obliged to stop again. "Five hundred lines for Soubeyrol! Fouque and Loupi will be kept in on Sunday." After this, he finishes his letter:

Good-bye, Jacques. There is much more that I want to say to you, but I feel that I shall cry, and the boys are watching me. Tell Mamma that I slipped from the top of a cliff, on a walk, or that I was drowned skating. Invent any story you choose, but never let the poor woman know the truth. Kiss my dear mother many times for me; kiss my father, too, and try soon to rebuild a beautiful hearth for them. Good-bye; I love you. Remember Daniel.

The letter ended, Little What 's-His-Name begins another conceived thus:

MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ, — I beg you to see that the letter I leave for my brother Jacques be sent to him. At the same time please cut off my hair and make a little package of it for my mother.

I beg your pardon for the pain I give you. I killed myself because I was too unhappy here. You alone, Monsieur l'Abbé, have always shown kindness to me. I thank you for it.

DANIEL.

After this, Little What 's-His-Name puts this letter and the one for Jacques into one large envelope, with this superscription: "The person who first finds my body is requested to give this letter into the Abbé Germane's hands." Then, having attended to all his affairs, he waits quietly for the end of the study-hour.

The study-hour is over. First, they have supper, then prayers, and all go up to the dormitory.

The boys go to bed; Little What 's-His-Name walks up and down, waiting for them to fall asleep. Here is M. Viot, making his rounds; the mysterious clank of his keys is to be heard, and the muffled sound of his slippers on the floor. "Good-night, M. Viot," murmurs Little What 's-His-Name. "Good-night, sir," answers the inspector, in a low voice; then he goes away, and his steps are lost in the corridor.

Little What 's-His-Name is alone. He opens the door softly, and stops a moment on the land-

ing to see if the boys are not going to wake up; but all is quiet in the dormitory.

Then he goes downstairs, and slips along on tip-toe in the shadow of the walls. The north wind blows drearily through the cracks underneath the doors. At the foot of the staircase, passing in front of the peristyle, he sees the court-yard white with snow, lying within the four big dark school-buildings.

Up there, near the roof, a lamp is burning; it is the Abbé Germane at work upon his great book. From the bottom of his heart, Little What's-His-Name sends a last and most sincere farewell to the good Abbé; then he enters the *hall.*

The old gymnasium of the naval academy is filled with cold and sinister shadow. A little moonlight falls through the grated window, and strikes full upon the big iron ring, — oh, that ring! Little What's-His-Name has done nothing but think of it for hours, — upon the big iron ring that shines like silver. In a corner of the *hall,* an old stool had long been lying about unnoticed. Little What's-His-Name goes and gets it, carries it under the ring, and mounts upon it; he was not mistaken, it is just the proper height. Then he undoes his cravat, a long cravat of violet silk that he wears tied round his neck like a ribbon. He attaches the cravat to the ring, and makes a slip-noose. One o'clock strikes. Come, it is time to die. With trembling hands Little What's-His-Name pulls open the slip-noose; a sort of delirium carries

him away. "Good-bye, Jacques; good-bye, Mme. Eyssette.

Suddenly an iron hand grasps him. He feels himself seized round the middle, lifted from the stool, and set down on his feet upon the ground. At the same time a harsh, satirical voice that he knows well, says:

"This is an idea, to try the trapeze at such time of night!"

Little What's-His-Name turns in amazement.

It is the Abbé Germane, the Abbé Germane, without his cassock, in short trousers, his neck-band floating down over his waistcoat. A single hand has sufficed him to lift the suicide from the stool; with the other hand he still holds his decanter, which he has just filled at the fountain in the court.

The Abbé Germane stops smiling as he sees Little What's-His-Name's wild face and tearful eyes, and repeats, only this time in a gentle and almost tender voice:

"What an odd idea, my dear Daniel, to try the trapeze at this hour!"

Little What's-His-Name is quite red and abashed.

"I am not trying the trapeze, sir; I want to die."

"What! You want to die? Are you very unhappy?"

"Oh!" answers Little What's-His-Name, with big burning tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Daniel, you must come with me," says the Abbé.

Little What 's-His-Name makes a gesture that he cannot, and points to the iron ring with the cravat. The Abbé Germane takes him by the hand. "Here, come up to my room; if you want to kill yourself, very well, you may do it up there; there is a fire, and it is comfortable."

But Little What 's-His-Name resists. "Let me die, sir. You have no right to prevent me from dying."

A flash of anger gleams in the priest's eyes.

"Ah, that 's it, is it?" said he. And taking hold of Little What 's-His-Name roughly by the waist, he carries him off under his arm like a bundle, in spite of his resistance and prayers.

Here we are now in the Abbé Germane's room; a large fire burns in the fireplace; near the fire there is a table with a lighted lamp, some pipes, and piles of papers covered with a scrawling hand.

Little What 's-His-Name is seated in the chimney-corner. He is much excited and talks a great deal; he tells the story of his life, his misfortunes, and why he wanted to put an end to everything. The Abbé listens with a smile; then, when the boy has talked and cried his fill, and has relieved his poor sick heart, the kind man takes his hands and says to him very quietly:

"All this is nothing, my boy, and you would have been a great fool to put yourself to death for so little. Your story is very simple; they have discharged you from the school, which, by the way, is great luck for you. Well, you must go, and go at once without waiting out your week.

You are not a cook, the deuce take it! Don't bother about your journey and your debts; I will attend to all that. I will lend you the money you wanted to borrow from that scoundrel. We shall arrange all that to-morrow. Not a word more now! I need to work, and you need to sleep. Only, I do not want you to return to your dreadful dormitory, for you would be cold and frightened there; you must lie down in my bed; there were nice clean sheets put on this morning. I shall write all night, and if I grow sleepy I shall stretch myself on the sofa. Good-night; don't speak any more."

Little What's-His-Name goes to bed, and makes no further opposition. All that is happening makes the effect of a dream upon him. How many events in one day! After having been so near death, how strange to find himself in a soft bed, in a warm, quiet room!

How comfortable Little What's-His-Name is! From time to time as he opens his eyes, he sees, in the dim light of the shaded lamp, the good Abbé Germane, smoking, and plying his pen quickly and noiselessly from top to bottom of the blank sheets of paper.

I was wakened the next morning by the Abbé, who tapped me on the shoulder. I had forgotten everything in my sleep, and this made my rescuer laugh a great deal.

"Come, my boy," said he, "the bell is ringing; make haste. Nobody will have noticed anything; go and take charge of the boys as usual, and at

the recess at lunch-time I shall expect you here for a talk."

My memory suddenly returned. I tried to thank him, but the good Abbé positively put me out of the door.

I need not say whether the study-hour seemed long to me. The boys were not yet in the court before I was already knocking at the Abbé's door. I found him before his desk, the drawers of which were wide open, occupied in counting gold pieces that he was carefully laying down in little piles.

He turned his head at the noise I made in entering, and then set to work again, without speaking; when he had finished he shut his drawers, and beckoned to me with a kind smile.

"All this is for you," said he. "I have counted up your expenses. This is for your journey, this is for the porter, this is for the Café Barbette, and this is for the boy who lent you ten francs. I had put this money aside to provide a substitute for my younger brother, but he will not be drawn for six years, and we shall see each other again before then."

I wanted to speak, but this singular man would not allow me time for it.

"Now, my boy, say good-bye to everybody; there is the bell ringing for my class, and when I come back from it I don't want to find you here any longer. The air of this Bastille is not good for you. Go straight to Paris, work hard, pray to God, smoke a pipe, and try to be a man. Do you hear? try to be a man. For, you see, my little

Daniel, you are but a child yet, and I am even afraid lest you may be a child all your life."

Thereupon he opened his arms to me with a divine smile; but I threw myself at his feet, sobbing. He lifted me up, and kissed me on both cheeks.

The bell rang for the last time.

"There now, I am late," said he, getting together his books and copy books in haste. As he was about to leave the room he turned again toward me.

"I, too, have a brother in Paris, a very good fellow who is a priest, and you might go and see him. But, in the crazy state you are in, you would only forget his address." And without saying anything further, he began to stride down the stairs. His cassock floated behind him; in his right hand he carried his cap, and, under his left arm a big bundle of books and papers. Kind Abbé Germane! Before going, I cast a last look about the room; I surveyed for the last time the large library, the little table, the half-extinguished fire, the armchair where I had cried so long, the bed where I had slept so well; and thinking of that mysterious existence in which I could divine so much courage and hidden kindness, so much devotion and resignation, I could not help blushing at my own baseness, and took an oath that I should always remember the Abbé Germane.

Meanwhile the time was passing: I had my trunk to pack, my debts to pay, and my place to engage in the stage.

Just as I was leaving I caught sight of several old black pipes on a corner of the mantelpiece. I took the oldest, blackest, and shortest, and put it in my pocket as a relic; then I went downstairs. Below, the door of the old gymnasium was still half open. I could not help looking in as I passed, and what I saw made me shudder.

I saw the great, gloomy, cold hall, the polished iron ring, and my violet cravat tied in a slip-noose, waving in the draught of air above the overturned stool.

CHAPTER XIII.

M. VIOT'S KEYS.

As I was hurrying out of the schoolhouse, still moved by the horrible sight I had just seen, the porter's lodge opened abruptly, and I heard some one calling me:

"Monsieur Eyssette! Monsieur Eyssette!"

It was the proprietor of the Café Barbette and his worthy friend M. Cassagne, looking scared and almost insolent.

The owner of the café spoke first.

"Is it true that you are going away, Monsieur Eyssette?"

"Yes, Monsieur Barbette," I answered calmly; "I am going to-day."

M. Barbette gave a bound, and M. Cassagne another; but M. Barbette's bound was much greater than M. Cassagne's, because I owed him much more money.

"What! to-day?"

"To-day; and I am going out in haste to engage my seat in the stage."

I thought they were going to spring at my throat.

"And my money?" said M. Barbette.

"And mine?" shrieked M. Cassagne.

Without answering, I entered the lodge, and gravely drawing out by handfuls the Abbé Germane's beautiful gold pieces, I began to count out on the end of the table what I owed them both.

This was most unforeseen. The two scowling faces smoothed themselves out as if by magic. When they had pocketed their money, being a little ashamed of the fears they had shown me, and very happy to be paid, they overflowed in compliments, condolences, and protestations of friendship.

"Are you really leaving us, Monsieur Eyssette? Oh! What a pity! What a loss to the school!"

Then followed ohs! and ahs! regrets, sighs, handshakes, and suppressed tears.

The evening before, I might have been taken in by this semblance of affection; but now I was rough-shod in matters of sentiment.

The few minutes passed in the arbor had taught me to know mankind, — at least, I thought so, — and the more affable these low fellows appeared, the more disgust they inspired in me. Therefore, cutting short their ridiculous effusions, I left the school, and went at once to engage my seat in the blessed stage that was to carry me far from all these monsters.

Returning from the stage-coach office, I passed in front of the Café Barbette, but I did not go in; the place was hateful to me. Only, impelled by I know not what unhealthy curiosity, I looked in through the dirty window-panes. The café was full of people; it was the day for playing pool.

Through the pipe-smoke I could see the bright tufts of the shakoes and the shining sword-belts hanging on the pegs. The noble fellows were there all told, none but the fencing-master was missing.

I looked for a moment at those coarse red faces, multiplied in the mirrors, at the absinthe dancing in the glasses, and the decanters of brandy, notched on the edges, and the thought that I had lived in that sty made me blush. I could see again Little What's-His-Name moving round the billiard-table, marking the points, paying for the punch, humiliated, despised, degenerating day by day, — either chewing the end of a pipe or humming a barrack-room ballad. This vision terrified me still more than that I had had in the hall of the gymnasium, when I saw my little violet cravat floating in the air. I fled.

Now, as I was on my way to the school, followed by the stage porter who was to carry my trunk, I saw the fencing-master briskly approaching the square, a cane in his hand, and his felt hat cocked over one ear, as he watched the reflection of his fine moustache in his beautiful patent-leather boots. From a distance I looked at him with admiration, saying to myself: "What a pity that such a handsome man should have such an ugly soul!" He, on his side, had caught sight of me, and came toward me with a kind, loyal smile, and his two arms wide open. Oh! that arbor!

"I was searching for you," said he. "What is it I hear? You —"

He stopped short. My look froze the lying phrases on his lips. And in this steady, direct glance, face to face, the wretch must have read many things, for suddenly he turned pale, stammered, and lost countenance. But it was only for a moment; he recovered his florid manner immediately, looked straight into my eyes with eyes cold and glittering as steel, and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets with an air of resolution, he left me, muttering that those who were not satisfied would only have to come and tell him so.

Go, ruffian!

When I reached the school the boys were at recitation. We went up to my attic; the porter hoisted the trunk on his shoulders and went downstairs with it. I stayed a few moments longer in that glacial room, looking at the bare dirty walls, the black slashed desk, and through the narrow window, at the plane-trees in the court that showed their snow-covered tops. And in my heart I said good-bye to all.

Just then I heard a voice of thunder scolding in the recitation-room. It was the Abbé Germane's voice. It warmed my heart and brought a few refreshing tears to my eyes.

After this, I went slowly downstairs, looking attentively about me, as if to carry away in my eyes the complete image of these places that I was never to see again. It was thus I traversed the long corridors with the high, grated windows, where the black eyes had appeared to me for the first time. God bless you, dear black eyes! I

passed also in front of the principal's study, with its mysterious double door; then, a few steps farther on, in front of M. Viot's study. There I stopped suddenly. Oh, joy and delight! The keys, the terrible keys were hanging in the lock, and the wind stirred them gently. I looked at them with a kind of religious terror; then, all at once, a thought of revenge overtook me. Treacherously, and with a sacrilegious hand, I extracted the bunch from the lock, and hiding it under my overcoat rushed downstairs at full speed.

In the court of the intermediates there was a very deep well. I flew straight to it. At that hour the court was deserted; the fairy in spectacles had not yet raised her curtain. Everything favored my crime. Then, drawing the keys from under my coat, those wretched keys that had made me suffer so much, I threw them with all my might into the well. Clink, clank, clink! I heard them tumbling down, rebounding against the sides, and falling heavily into the water, which closed over them; and then, having committed the crime, I went smiling away.

In the vestibule, as I left the school, the last person I met was M. Viot, but a M. Viot without his keys, haggard and wild, running right and left. When he passed me, for a moment he looked at me with anguish. The poor man wanted to ask me if I had not seen *them*, but he did not dare. At this moment the porter bent over the top of the staircase and shouted: "Monsieur Viot, I cannot find them." I heard the owner of the keys

say: "O my God!" in a low voice, and then he started off like a madman in pursuit.

I should have been glad to enjoy this spectacle a little longer, but the horn of the stage sounded from the parade ground, and I did not want to have it go without me.

And now farewell forever, great smoky schoolhouse, built of old iron and black stones; farewell, bad boys; farewell, harsh discipline! Little What's-His-Name is taking flight, and will come back no more. And you, Marquis de Boucoyran, you may consider yourself lucky; he is going away without running you through with that famous thrust, so long meditated with the noble fellows of the Café Barbette.

Whip up, stage-driver! Sound, trumpet! Good old stage, roll on with all your speed, and carry off Little What's-His-Name with your three horses at a gallop. Carry him quickly to his native place, so that he may embrace his mother at his Uncle Baptiste's, and then turn his face toward Paris, to rejoin as soon as possible Eyssette (Jacques) in his room in the Latin Quarter.

CHAPTER XIV.

MY UNCLE BAPTISTE.

My Uncle Baptiste, my mother's brother, was a strange type of man. Neither kind nor unkind, and married early to a great grenadier of a woman, both thin and miserly, of whom he was afraid, this elderly child had but one passion in the world; the passion for coloring pictures. For some forty years he had lived surrounded by paint, paint-brushes, and paint-saucers, and spent his time coloring the pictures of illustrated papers. The house was full of old *Illustrations*, old *Charivaris*, old *Magazins pittoresques*, and old maps, all brightly painted. In his poor days, when my aunt refused him money to buy illustrated papers, my uncle had even taken to coloring books. It is an historical fact that I have held in my hand a Spanish grammar which my uncle had illuminated from one end to the other, the adjectives in blue, and the nouns in pink.

It was in the company of this old maniac and his ferocious wife that my mother had been forced to live for six months. The unfortunate woman spent all her days in her brother's room, striving to make herself useful to him. She wiped the brushes, and poured water into the saucers. The

saddest of all was that, since our ruin, my uncle Baptiste felt profound disdain for my father, and my poor mother was condemned, from morning till night to hear him say: "Eyssette is not serious-minded. Eyssette is not serious-minded." Ah, the old fool! And to see with what a sententious air of conviction he said that while he illuminated his Spanish grammar! Since then I have often in my life met with men who think themselves of great weight, and yet spend their time coloring Spanish grammars and finding fault with others for not being serious-minded.

I never knew until later all these details about my uncle and the dreary life my mother led with him; yet, as soon as I arrived at the house I understood that, whatever she said, my mother could not be happy. When I entered they had just sat down to table for dinner. Mme. Eyssette sprang up with joy as she saw me, and, as you may imagine, she hugged her Little What's-His-Name with all her might. Nevertheless, my poor mother looked embarrassed; she spoke little, always in a sweet low voice with a tremor in it, and looked down in her plate. It grieved me to see her in her scant black gown.

The reception I had from my uncle and aunt was very cold. My aunt asked me, with alarm, if I had dined. I hastened to say that I had, and my aunt breathed more freely; she had trembled a moment for her dinner. A pretty dinner! — chick-peas and codfish.

My uncle Baptiste asked me if I were on a vaca-

tion. I replied that I had left the school, and was on my way to Paris to join my brother Jacques, who had found a good place for me. I invented this story to reassure my poor mother about my future, and also to appear serious-minded in my uncle's eyes.

My aunt opened her eyes when she heard that Little What 's-His-Name had a good place.

"Daniel," said she, "you must make your mother go to Paris. The poor dear woman is pining, so far away from her children; and then, you understand, it is an expense for us to keep her, and your uncle cannot always be the *milch-cow* of the family."

"The fact is," said my uncle, with his mouth full, "that I am the *milch-cow*."

The expression *milch-cow* had enchanted him, and he repeated it several times with the same gravity.

The dinner lasted long, as with old people. My mother ate little, said a few words to me, and cast stolen glances at me; my aunt was watching her.

"Look at your sister," said she to her husband; "the joy of seeing Daniel again takes her appetite away. Yesterday she took two pieces of bread; to-day, only one."

Ah, dear mother! how I should have liked to carry you off that evening; how I should have liked to snatch you away from that pitiless milch-cow and his wife; but alas! I was going myself at a venture, with just enough to pay my journey, and I knew that Jacques' room could not be big enough

to hold us all three. Still, if I could only have spoken to you, and kissed you at my ease; but no, they never left us one moment alone. Immediately after dinner my uncle went back to his Spanish grammar, my aunt polished the silver, and both spied us out of the corners of their eyes. The hour came for me to go, without our being able to say anything to each other.

So it was that Little What 's-His-Name's heart was very full as he left his uncle's house; and as he walked along alone in the shade of the broad avenue that leads to the station, he swore solemnly, two or three times, to behave henceforward like a man, and to think of nothing but rebuilding the hearth.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

MY INDIA-RUBBERS.

EVEN if I should live as long as my uncle Baptiste, who must now be as old as an old baobab tree in Central Africa, I shall never forget my first journey to Paris in a third-class carriage.

It was late in February, and still very cold. Outside, a gray sky, wind and sleet, bare hills, inundated meadows, and long rows of dead vines; inside, drunken sailors singing, big peasants sleeping with their mouths open like dead fish, little old women with their baskets, children, nurses, all the paraphernalia of a third-class carriage, with its smell of pipe-smoke, brandy, sausage made with garlic, and mouldy straw. I think I am back there again.

On starting I had established myself in a corner by a window, so that I might see the sky; but after we had gone about five miles, a soldiers' hospital nurse took my seat, under pretext of being opposite his wife, and there was Little What's-His-Name, too timid to complain, condemned to ride five hundred miles between this big, odious man, who smelt of flax-seed, and a great drum-major of a peasant woman, who snored all the time, with her head on her shoulder.

The journey lasted two days. I spent these two days in the same place, motionless between my two tormentors, my head rigid, and my teeth set. As I had neither money nor provisions, I ate nothing all the way. It is long to go two days without eating. It is true that I still had a two-franc piece, but I kept it carefully, lest when I should arrive in Paris I should not find Jacques at the station; and, in spite of my hunger, I had the resolution not to spend any of it. The worst was that they were eating a great deal round me in the carriage. Under my legs there was a beast of a basket, very heavy, whence my neighbor, the hospital nurse, constantly drew sausages of various kinds, which he shared with his wife. The proximity of this basket made me very miserable, above all, the second day. However, it was not from hunger that I suffered most during that terrible journey. I had left Sarlande without shoes, having nothing on my feet except some little thin india-rubbers, that had done very well for me at the school, when I made my rounds in the dormitory. India-rubbers are very good things, but in winter, in a third-class carriage — O God! how cold I was! It was enough to make me cry. At night, when everybody was asleep, I took my feet noiselessly in my hands, and held them for whole hours, trying to warm them. Ah, if Mme. Eyssette had seen me!

And yet, in spite of the hunger that tortured his stomach, in spite of the cruel cold that drew tears from him, Little What's-His-Name was very

happy, and for nothing in the world would he have given up his seat, the half-seat he occupied between the peasant-woman and the hospital nurse. At the end of all these sufferings, there was Jacques, there was Paris.

In the night of the second day, toward three o'clock in the morning, I was waked with a start. The train had stopped; all the people in the carriage were astir.

I heard the hospital nurse say to his wife:

"Here we are."

"Where?" I asked, rubbing my eyes.

"At Paris, of course."

I rushed toward the door. There were no houses to be seen; nothing but bare country, a few gas jets, and here and there a great heap of coal on the ground; then, farther off, in the distance, a great red light, and a confused murmur, like the sound of the sea. A man went along, from door to door, with a little lantern, crying: "Paris! Paris! Tickets!" Involuntarily, I drew in my head in an impulse of terror. It was Paris.

Ah, great cruel city! what good reason Little What's-His-Name had to fear you!

Five minutes later we entered the station. Jacques had been there for an hour. I saw him a long way off, with his tall figure somewhat bent, and his long arms telegraphing me signs behind the grating. With a bound I was upon him.

"Jacques! my dear brother!"

"Ah, my dear boy!"

And our two souls clasped each other with all the strength of our arms. Unfortunately, stations are not designed for these sweet embraces. There is a luggage-room, but there is no room for the outpourings of affection, no room for souls. The crowd jostled us and walked over us.

"Move on, move on!" cried the men of the octroi.

Jacques whispered to me: "Let us go. To-morrow I will send for your trunk."

And, arm in arm, our hearts as light as our purses, we set out for the Latin Quarter.

I have often tried since to recall the exact impression Paris made upon me that night; but things, like men, the first time we see them, take on a particular appearance that we can never discover in them again. I have never been able to reconstruct the Paris I saw on my arrival. It is like a misty city that I might have passed through as a child, years ago, and to which I have never returned since.

I remember a wooden bridge over a black river, then a long deserted quay, and an immense garden running along the quay. We stopped for a moment in front of the garden. Through the bars of the grating that fenced it in, I could see dimly, huts, grass, pools of water, and trees sparkling with hoar-frost.

"It is the Jardin des Plantes," said Jacques. "In it there are many polar bears, lions, boa-constrictors, and hippopotami."

In fact, I could smell the wild beasts, and now

and then a shrill cry or a hoarse roar came from the darkness.

Pressing close against my brother, I looked hard through the gratings, and confounding in the same sentiment of terror the unknown Paris, in which I had arrived at night, and this mysterious garden, it seemed to me I had landed in a great black cave, full of wild beasts that were about to fall upon me. Fortunately, I was not alone; I had Jacques to protect me. Oh, Jacques, Jacques! Why have I not had you always?

We walked on for a long, long time through interminable dark streets; then, all at once, Jacques stopped in a little square where there was a church.

"Here we are at Saint-Germain-des-Prés," said he. "Our room is up there."

"What, Jacques? In the clock-tower?"

"Yes, in the clock-tower. It is a very convenient place for knowing the time."

Jacques exaggerated a little. He lived in the house next the church, in a little attic, on the fifth or sixth story, and his window opened opposite the clock-tower, just at the height of the dial.

As I entered I cried with joy: "A fire! how delightful!" And I ran straight to the fireplace to hold up my feet to the flame, at the risk of melting my india-rubbers. Then only Jacques perceived the strangeness of my foot-gear. It made him laugh a great deal.

"My dear boy," said he, "a whole crowd of celebrated men come to Paris in sabots, and boast

of it. You can say you came here in india-rubbers, and that is much more original. In the meantime, put on these slippers of mine, and let 's begin on the pasty."

Saying this, the kind Jacques moved up in front of the fire a little table that was standing, all set, in the corner.

CHAPTER II.

SENT BY THE CURÉ OF SAINT-NIZIER.

O GOD! how happy we were that night in Jacques' room! What cheerful, bright reflections the fire made on our table-cloth! And that old sealed wine, how it smelt of violets! And what a beautiful crust of burnished gold the pasty had! Ah, they make no more such pasties now, and you will never drink any more such wines, poor Eyssette!

Opposite me, on the other side of the table, Jacques filled my glass, and every time I looked up, I saw his eyes, tender as a mother's, smiling gently at me. I was so happy to be there that it positively put me into a fever. I talked and talked.

"Do eat," said Jacques, as he piled up my plate; but I kept on talking instead of eating. Then, to make me keep quiet, he began to chatter himself, and related at length, without pausing for breath, all that he had done for more than a year, since we had seen each other.

"When you went away," said he, — and he always said the saddest things with a divine smile of resignation, — "when you went away the house became altogether gloomy. Our father did not

work any more; he spent his time in the shop, cursing the Revolutionists, and shouting to me that I was an ass, which did not improve matters. There were notes protested every morning, and visits from the sheriff's officer every few days. Every ring at the bell made our hearts jump. Oh, you went away at the right time!

"After a few months of this terrible existence, my father went to Brittany in the employ of a company of wine-merchants, and my mother to Uncle Baptiste's. I saw them both off. You may think how much I cried. As soon as their backs were turned all our poor furniture was sold; yes, my dear, sold in the street, before my eyes, in front of our door; and I tell you it is very hard to see your house going to pieces like that. You don't know beforehand how all the things of wood or cloth we have in our houses become part of ourselves. And when they took off the linen-press, the one you remember, that has pink cupids on the panels, I wanted to run after the person who bought it, and scream to have him arrested. You can understand, can't you?

"Out of all our furniture, I kept only a chair, a mattress, and a broom; the broom was very useful to me, as you will see. I deposited these treasures in a corner of our house in the Rue Lanterne, the rent of which was still paid for two months to come; and there I was, quite alone, occupying that large, bare, cold, curtainless apartment. Oh, my dear fellow, how gloomy it was! Every evening, when I came back from my office, it was a new

sorrow, and a sort of surprise to find myself alone, within those four walls. I went from one room to another, slamming the doors to make a noise. Sometimes it seemed to me that some one was calling me to the shop, and I answered: "I am coming." When I entered my mother's room I always thought I was going to see her, knitting sadly in her armchair, near the window.

"To crown my misery, the cockroaches reappeared. Those horrible little bugs that we had had so much trouble in fighting with when we arrived at Lyons, had evidently heard of your departure, and attempted a fresh invasion, much more terrible than the first. In the beginning I tried to resist them. I spent my evenings in the kitchen, a candle in one hand, and my broom in the other, fighting like a lion, but always crying. As, unluckily, I was alone, it was in vain that I tried to be everywhere at once; it was no longer as in old Annou's time. Besides, the cockroaches came in greater numbers. I am sure that all there are in Lyons — and God knows how many there are in that old damp city! — had risen in a body to come and besiege our house. The kitchen was black with them, and I was obliged to let them take possession of it. Sometimes I looked at them in terror through the keyhole. There were hundreds of thousands of them. Perhaps you may think the disgusting creatures stopped there! Oh, dear me! You don't know that tribe of the North! They invade everything. From the kitchen, in spite of doors and bolts, they crossed into the

dining-room in which I had my bed. I moved it to the shop, and then to the parlor. You laugh, but I should like to have seen you there!

"From room to room those cursed cockroaches drove me on, as far as our little old bedroom, at the end of the hall. There they gave me two or three days of respite; then, one morning as I woke, I saw a hundred of them creeping noiselessly along my broom, while another division of the army approached my bed in good order. Deprived of my arms, assaulted in my last rampart, there was nothing for me to do but fly; and that is what I did. I abandoned the mattress, chair, and broom to the cockroaches, and fled from that horrible house in the Rue Lanterne, never to return there any more.

"I passed a few months more at Lyons, but they were very long, gloomy, and tearful. At the office, I was called nothing but Mary Magdalen. I went nowhere; I had not a single friend. Your letters were my only distraction. Oh, dear Daniel, what a pretty way you have of saying things! I am sure you could write for the papers if you wished. It is not like me. Fancy that by dint of writing under dictation, I have managed to become about as intelligent as a sewing-machine. It is impossible for me to think of anything for myself. My father had every reason to call me an ass. After all, it is not so bad to be an ass. Asses are good creatures, patient, strong, laborious, with kind hearts and strong backs. But let us return to my story.

"In all your letters you kept speaking to me about the rebuilding of the hearth, and, thanks to your eloquence, I had kindled like you with this great idea. Unfortunately, what I earned at Lyons was barely enough for me to live upon, so it was then the thought came to me of setting out for Paris. It seemed to me that there I should be better able to help my family, and should find the materials necessary for that famous reconstruction of ours. I decided upon my journey, only I took my precautions. I did not want to arrive in the streets of Paris like a plucked sparrow. It might do for you, Daniel; there are special graces attached to the condition of a good-looking fellow; but for a great blubberer like me!

"So I went to ask for some letters of recommendation from our friend the Curé of Saint-Nizier, who is a very influential man in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. He gave me two letters, one for a Count, and the other for a Duke. I am well dressed, as you see; the next thing I did was to find a tailor, who was willing, for the sake of my respectable appearance, to give me on credit a handsome black coat with the other appurtenances, waistcoat, trousers, etc. I put my letters of recommendation in my coat, and my coat in a napkin, and set off, with sixty francs in my pocket: thirty-five for my journey, and twenty-five to last until something should turn up.

"The day after my arrival in Paris, at seven o'clock in the morning, I was out in the streets, in a black coat and yellow gloves. For your guid-

ance, little Daniel, I mention that what I did was very ridiculous. At seven o'clock in the morning, in Paris, all the black coats are in bed or they ought to be. But I did not know this, and was very proud of wearing mine about in these great streets, and making my new boots ring on the pavement. I thought, too, that by going out early I should have a better chance of meeting with good luck. This was another mistake: good luck does not get up early in the morning at Paris.

"There I was, then, trotting about the Faubourg Saint-Germain with my letters of recommendation in my pocket.

"I went first to the Count in the Rue de Lille; and then to the Duke in the Rue Saint-Guillaume. At both places I found the servants busy washing the court-yards and polishing the copper bell-handles. When I told these rascals the Curé of Saint-Nizier had sent me to see their master, they laughed in my face, and flung buckets of water at my legs. What can you say, my dear boy? It was my own fault; only chiropodists go to visit such people at that hour. I accepted this as final.

"Such as I know you to be, I am sure that, in my place, you would never have dared to return to those houses and confront the jeering looks of that pack of lackeys. Well, I returned there with assurance that same day in the afternoon, and, as in the morning, I asked the servants to announce me to their masters, always as sent by the Curé of Saint-Nizier. I was rewarded for my courage: the two gentlemen were visible, and I was immedi-

ately admitted. I found two very different men and two very different welcomes. The Count in the Rue de Lille received me very coldly. His long, thin face, serious to solemnity, frightened me very much, and I could not find two words to say to him. He, on his part, scarcely spoke to me. He glanced at the Curé of Saint-Nizier's letter, put it in his pocket, asked me to leave him my address, and dismissed me with an icy gesture, saying: 'I shall bear you in mind; it is useless for you to come back here. If I find anything, I shall write you of it.'

"The devil take the man! I left the house chilled to the marrow-bone, but fortunately, I was received at the Rue Saint-Guillaume in a way to warm my heart. I found the Duke the most cheerful, full-blown, plump, and pleasing of men. How much he cared for his dear Curé of Saint-Nizier, and how certain everybody sent by him would be of a hearty welcome in the Rue Saint-Guillaume! Oh, what a kind, good man the Duke was! We were friends at once. He offered me a pinch from his snuff-box, pulled the tip of my ear, and sent me away with a slap on the cheek and encouraging words.

"'I undertake to look after you, and shall soon find what you want. In the meanwhile, come and see me as often as you like.'

"I went away delighted.

"For discretion's sake, I let two days pass without returning there, and it was not till the third day that I went as far as the Rue Saint-Guillaume.

A big fellow in blue and gold asked me my name. I answered in a consequential tone:

"'Say that I am sent by the Curé of Saint-Nizier.'

"He came back in a moment.

"'The Duke is extremely busy. He begs you to excuse him, sir, and to step in another day.'

"You may imagine whether I excused the poor Duke!

"The next day I returned at the same hour. I found the same fellow in blue of the day before, perched like a parrot on the steps. As soon as he saw me coming he said gravely:

"'The Duke has gone out.'

"'Oh, very well,' I answered, 'I will come back again. Tell him, please, it is the person sent by the Curé of Saint-Nizier.'

"The next day I returned again, and also on the following days, but always with the same want of success. Once the Duke was taking a bath; another time he was at mass; one day he was playing tennis, and on another he had somebody with him. Somebody with him! That was a way of expressing it! Was n't I somebody, too?

"In the end, I thought I was so ridiculous with my eternal 'sent by the Curé of Saint-Nizier' that I dared no longer say who had sent me. But the big blue parrot on the steps would never let me go without saying with imperturbable gravity:

"'I think you are the gentleman sent by the Curé of Saint-Nizier.'

"This caused much laughter among the other

blue parrots lounging about in the court-yards. Pack of scamps! If I could have given them a good cudgelling on my own account, and not on that of the Curé of Saint-Nizier!

"I had been about ten days in Paris when, one evening as I came back hanging my head from one of these visits to the Rue Saint-Guillaume,—I had sworn to keep on going there until they should shut the door in my face,—I found a little note waiting for me with my porter. Guess from whom. A note from the Count, my dear fellow, from the Count in the Rue de Lille, asking me to present myself, without delay, at the house of his friend the Marquis d'Hacqueville, who was looking for a secretary. Think what joy, and also what a lesson! That cold, dry man, on whom I had counted so little, was just the person who took pains for me; whereas the other, who appeared so cordial, had let me dance attendance for a week upon his steps, exposed, together with the Curé of Saint-Nizier, to the insolent laughter of the blue-and-gold parrots. That is life, my dear boy; and in Paris a man learns it quickly.

"Without losing a moment I ran to the Marquis d'Hacqueville's. I found a little, brisk, thin old man, all nerves, alert and gay as a butterfly. You will see what a good type he is: an aristocratic face, pale and finely cut, hair absolutely straight, and only one eye, as the other was put out by a sword-thrust long ago. But the one he has left is so bright, so living, speaking, and penetrating, that you cannot call him one-eyed. He has two eyes in one, that's all.

"When I was ushered in before this strange, little old man, I began with some commonplaces suited to the circumstances, but he cut me short.

"'No phrases,' said he. 'I don't like them. Let us come to facts. I have undertaken to write my memoirs, but, I regret to say, I have set rather too late about it, and have no time to lose, as I am beginning to grow old. I have calculated that, by using every moment, I need still three more years to finish my work. I am seventy years old, and my legs are shaky, but my head is as good as ever, so I may hope to last three years more and bring my memoirs to a satisfactory end. Only I have not a minute to spare, and that is what my secretary could not understand. That idiot — a very intelligent boy, though, on my word, with whom I was delighted — took it into his head to fall in love and to want to get married. So far so good, but lo and behold, the fellow comes this morning to ask for two days' vacation, to celebrate his wedding. Yes, indeed, two days' vacation! Not one moment.

"' "But, sir," said he.

"' "There is no *but, sir;* if you go off for two days, you go for good and all."

"' "I must go, sir."

"' "Good-bye."

"'And now the rascal has gone. I depend upon you, my dear boy, to replace him. The conditions are these: The secretary comes to me at eight o'clock in the morning; he brings his lunch with him. I dictate until noon. At noon, the secre-

tary lunches alone, for I never lunch. After the secretary's lunch, which must be a short one, we set to work again. If I go out, the secretary goes with me, taking with him a pencil and paper. I keep on dictating; driving, walking, visiting, everywhere. In the evening the secretary dines with me. After dinner we read over what I have dictated during the day. At eight I go to bed, and the secretary is free until the next day. I give him a hundred francs a month, and his dinner. It is not Peru; but in three years, when the memoirs are finished, I will give a present, a royal present, on the honor of a d'Hacqueville. What I ask is that you be exact, that you do not marry, and that you know how to write quickly under dictation. Can you write under dictation?'

"'Oh, very well, sir!' I answered with a strong desire to laugh.

"It was ludicrous, in fact, that fate should be determined to make me write under dictation all my life.

"'Well, then, sit down there,' said the Marquis. 'Here is ink and paper. We will set to work at once. I am in Chapter XXIV., *My quarrel with M. de Villèle.* Write!'

"And he immediately begins to dictate in a little voice like a grasshopper, hopping from one end of the room to the other.

"It is thus, Daniel, that I entered the service of this original person, who is an excellent man at the bottom, and so far we are well content with each other. Yesterday evening, when he learned

you were coming, he made me a present of this bottle of old wine for you. We have one like it served with our dinner every day, and this shows you whether we dine well or not. In the morning I carry my own lunch with me, and you would laugh to see me eating two sous' worth of Italian cheese in a delicate china plate, on an emblazoned table-cloth. The old gentleman arranged this so, not out of avarice, but in order to spare his elderly cook, M. Pilois, the trouble of preparing my lunch. On the whole, the life I am leading is not disagreeable. The memoirs of the Marquis are very instructive, and I am learning a quantity of details about M. Decazes, and M. Villèle that cannot fail to be of service to me some day or other. At eight o'clock in the evening I am free. I go to a reading-room to see the newspapers, or to say how d'ye do to our friend Pierrotte. Do you remember Pierrotte? You know Pierrotte of the Cévennes, mamma's foster-brother. To-day, Pierrotte is no longer Pierrotte; he is M. Pierrotte, in capital letters. He has a handsome china shop in the Passage du Saumon; and, as he was very fond of our mother, I found his doors wide open to me. It was a great resource in the winter evenings; but now that you are here, I am not troubled about my evenings any more, nor you either, are you, dear old boy? Oh! Daniel, Daniel, I am so pleased! How happy we are going to be!"

CHAPTER III.

MOTHER JACQUES.

JACQUES has finished his Odyssey; and now it is my turn. In vain the dying fire signals to us: "Go to bed, children," in vain the candles cry, "To bed, to bed! We are burned to the sockets." "We are not listening to you," Jacques says to them, smiling, and our vigil continues.

You can understand that what I tell my brother interests him very much. It is about Little What's-His-Name's life at the school of Sarlande, — the sad life which the reader doubtless remembers. It is the story of ugly, cruel children; of persecution, hatred, and humiliation; of M. Viot's keys that are always angry; of the little suffocating room under the roof; of treachery and tearful nights; and then, too, — for Jacques is so indulgent that I can tell him everything, — the sprees at the Café Barbette, the absinthe with the corporals, my debts and self-abandonment; everything in fact, — even to the suicide, and the Abbé Germane's terrible prediction: "You will be a child all your life."

Jacques, with his elbows on the table, and his head in his hands, listens till the end of my confession without interrupting me. From time to time I see him shudder, and hear him say: "Poor little fellow, poor little fellow!"

When I have finished he rises and takes my hands, saying in a sweet voice that has a tremor in it: "The Abbé Germane was right; do you see, Daniel, you are a child, a little child incapable of walking alone through life, and you have done well to take refuge with me. From this day henceforth, you are no longer only my brother, you are my son too; and since our mother is far away, I shall take her place. Will you let me, — tell me, Daniel, will you let me be a mother to you? I shall not bother you very much, you will see. All I ask of you is to let me always walk by your side and hold your hand. If I do that, you may be at ease, and may look life in the face, like a man; it will not swallow you up."

In answer, I fling my arms round his neck. "O dear Mother Jacques! how good you are!" And there I am, weeping warm tears, without being able to stop myself, just like the old Jacques of Lyons. The present Jacques does not cry any more; the cistern is dry, as he says. Whatever happens, he will never cry again.

At this moment seven o'clock strikes. The window panes begin to glimmer, and a pale light comes quivering into the room.

"There is daylight, Daniel," said Jacques. "It is time to sleep. Go to bed quickly; you must need rest."

"And you, Jacques?"

"Oh! I? I have not been shaken up by two days in the train. Besides, before I go to the Marquis I must return some books to the circulating library,

and I have no time to lose; you know d'Hacqueville won't stand joking. I shall come back this evening at eight o'clock. When you are thoroughly rested, you may go out a little way. Above all, I charge you — "

Here my Mother Jacques begins a string of injunctions that are very important for a greenhorn like me; unluckily, in the meantime I have stretched myself on the bed, and, without being precisely asleep, my mind is no longer clear. My fatigue, the pasty, and my tears — I am very drowsy. I hear in a confused way that some one is telling me of a restaurant near at hand, of money in my waistcoat pocket, bridges to pass, boulevards to follow, policemen to consult, and the tower of Saint-Germain-des-Prés that is to be my rallying-point. In my half-sleeping condition, the tower of Saint-Germain makes more impression upon me than all the rest. I see two, five, ten towers of Saint-Germain ranged round my bed like sign-posts. Between the sign-posts somebody is going to and fro through the room, poking the fire, and drawing the window-curtains; then he approaches me, throws a cloak over my feet, kisses my forehead, and goes away softly, shutting the door behind him.

I slept for some hours, and I think I should have slept till Mother Jacques' return if I had not been suddenly wakened by the sound of a bell. It was the bell of Sarlande, the horrible iron bell, clanging as usual: "Ding-dong! Wake up! Ding-dong! Dress yourself!" With a bound I sprang into the middle of the room, my mouth open

ready to cry as I used to do in the dormitory: "Get up, gentlemen!" Then, when I found that I was in Jacques' room, I burst out laughing aloud, and began skipping madly about. What I had taken for the bell of Sarlande, was the bell of a neighboring factory, which rang harshly and ferociously like the one so far away. Still, the school-bell was even more metallic and cruel. Fortunately for me, it was five hundred miles off; and, however loud it rang, I ran no more risk of hearing it.

I went to the window and opened it. I expected to see below me the court of the seniors, with its melancholy trees and the man with the keys slinking round the walls.

Just as I opened the window, the midday bells were ringing everywhere. The tall tower of Saint-Germain first tolled the twelve strokes of the *Angelus* one after the other. Almost in my ears through the open casement, the great, heavy notes fell into Jacques' room, three by three, bursting as they fell, like sonorous bubbles, filling all the place with sound. The other *Angelus* of Paris answered the *Angelus* of Saint-Germain, in different keys. Beneath, the invisible Paris roared. I stayed there a moment looking at the domes, spires and towers glittering in the light; then, all at once, as the noise of the city reached me, I was overtaken by a mad, indescribable desire to plunge and roll in the noise and crowd, in that life, in those passions; and I said to myself rapturously: "Let me go to see Paris."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DISCUSSION OF THE BUDGET.

ON that day, more than one Parisian must have said as he returned home in the evening to dine: "What a strange little fellow I met to-day!" The truth is, that with his hair that was too long, his trousers that were too short, his india-rubbers, his blue stockings, his provincial fragrance and that solemnity of gait peculiar to all creatures that are too little, Little What 's-His-Name must have been entirely ludicrous.

It was a day toward the end of winter, one of those soft bright days that, at Paris, have more of spring in them than the springtime itself. There were many people out-of-doors. Slightly bewildered by the noisy movement in the street, I walked timidly, straight ahead, along the walls. When anybody jostled against me, I begged pardon and blushed; I was careful not to stop before the shops, and, for nothing in the world would I have asked my way. I took one street and then another, always straight on. I was stared at, and that embarrassed me very much. Some people turned round after they had passed me, and some laughed as they brushed by me; once, I heard one woman say to another: "Just look at him."

This made me wince, and what troubled me very much, too, was the searching eyes of the policemen. At every street corner, this strange, silent glance was fixed curiously upon me; and when I had gone by, I still felt it following me from a distance and burning my back. At the bottom, I was rather uneasy.

I walked thus for nearly an hour, till I reached a great boulevard planted with slender trees. There was so much noise there, so many people and carriages, that I stopped, almost alarmed. "How shall I get out of here?" thought I to myself. "How shall I get home again? If I ask for the tower of Saint-Germain, they will laugh at me. I shall look like a wandering tower myself, coming back from Rome at Easter."

So, in order to give myself time to adopt a resolution, I paused before some play-bills, with the absorbed air of a man who is making his choice of entertainments for the evening. Unfortunately, the play-bills, although very interesting, gave me not the slightest information concerning the tower of Saint-Germain, and I was in great danger of staying there until the sound of the last trump, when suddenly my Mother Jacques appeared at my side. He was as surprised as I.

"What? Is it you, Daniel? What are you doing here, for Heaven's sake?"

I answered carelessly:

"I am taking a walk, as you see."

The good fellow looked at me with admiration.

"You are really a Parisian already."

As a matter of fact, I was very glad to have him with me, and clung to his arm with a childish joy, as at Lyons when my father came to get us on the boat.

"What good luck that we have met," said Jacques. "My Marquis has lost his voice, and as, happily, he cannot dictate by gestures, he has given me a holiday till to-morrow. We shall profit by it to take a long walk."

Thereupon he pulls me along with him, and here we are starting out through Paris, each pressing close against the other, very proud to be walking together.

Now that my brother is with me, I am no longer afraid of the streets. I walk with head erect, and a self-assurance worthy of a trumpeter of zouaves, and woe unto him who dares to laugh! Nevertheless, one thing makes me uneasy. As we go along, Jacques looks at me several times with a compassionate air. I do not venture to ask the reason.

"Do you know that your india-rubbers are very nice?" said he, after a minute.

"Are n't they, Jacques?"

"Yes, indeed, very nice." Then he added, smiling: "All the same, when I am rich, I shall buy you a good pair of shoes to wear inside of them."

Poor, dear Jacques! He says this without the least idea of wounding me, but it is enough to put me out of countenance. All my mortification has come back again. On that great boulevard, brilliant with sunlight, I feel that I am ridiculous in

my india-rubbers, and in spite of all Jacques can say in praise of my foot-gear, I wish to go home at once.

We return to establish ourselves by the fireside, and spend the rest of the day pleasantly in chattering together like two sparrows in the gutter. Towards evening, somebody raps at the door. It is one of the Marquis's servants with my trunk.

"All right," says my Mother Jacques. "We are going to inspect your wardrobe a little."

Good gracious, my wardrobe!

The inspection begins. The piteously comic air with which we take this meagre inventory is worth seeing. Jacques, on his knees before the trunk, draws out the articles, one after another, and announces what they are. "A dictionary, a cravat, another dictionary, and here 's a pipe, — then you smoke! Another pipe — great heavens! how many pipes? If you only had as many shoes! And this big book. What is it? Oh! Oh! Book of punishments — Boucoyran five hundred lines, Soubeyrol, four hundred lines, Boucoyran, five hundred lines, Boucoyran — Boucoyran — on my soul, you did not treat Boucoyran with much consideration. All the same, two or three dozen shirts would be more to our purpose."

At this point of the inventory my Mother Jacques utters a cry of surprise.

"Mercy, Daniel! What do I see? Verses? Here are verses. Then you still write them? Why did you never mention them in your letters, you mysterious boy? You know well enough that I am

"This threat persuades me, and I begin to read."

not one of the profane. I have written poems, too, in my time. Do you remember *Religion! Religion! A poem in twelve cantos?* Now, Master Poet, let me look at your poems!"

"Oh, no! please don't, Jacques. They are not worth the trouble."

"Poets are all alike," says Jacques, with a laugh.

"Now, sit down there, and read me your verses; if you won't, I shall read them myself, and you know how badly I read."

This threat persuades me, and I begin to read.

They are the verses I wrote at the school of Sarlande, under the chestnut-trees in the meadow, while I had charge of the boys. Good or bad? I cannot remember, but how much emotion I feel in reading them! Only think, poems that I have never shown to anybody, and then, the author of *Religion! Religion!* is not an ordinary judge. What if he should make fun of me? However, as I read, the music of the rhymes intoxicates me, and my voice grows steady. Jacques listens impassively, seated in front of the window. Behind him, the great red sun is sinking on the horizon, and sets the window-panes ablaze. On the edge of the roof, a lean cat yawns and stretches itself, as it watches us; it has the scowl of a member of the Comédie-Française listening to a tragedy. I can see all this from the corner of my eye, without interrupting my reading.

Unexpected triumph! I have hardly finished when Jacques leaves his seat in ecstasy and falls on my neck.

"Oh, Daniel! How beautiful! How beautiful!"

I look at him with some mistrust.

"Do you really think so, Jacques?"

"Magnificent, my dear fellow, it is magnificent! When I think that you had all these treasures in your trunk and never spoke of them, it seems incredible."

And Mother Jacques begins to stride up and down the room, gesticulating and talking to himself. He stops suddenly, and assuming a solemn expression, says:

"There is no more need of hesitation: Daniel, you are a poet! You must remain a poet and try to make your living by it."

"Oh, Jacques! That is very difficult, particularly in the beginning. I should earn so little by it."

"Pooh! I can earn enough for both; don't be afraid."

"And our hearth, Jacques, our hearth that we want to rebuild?"

"Our hearth? I will take care of that; I feel strong enough to rebuild it by myself. You will make it illustrious, and think how proud our parents will be to sit down by an illustrious fireside!"

I try a few more objections, but Jacques has an answer for everything. Besides, I must confess, I resist but feebly.

My brother's enthusiasm is beginning to gain upon me, and my poetic faith is visibly urging me on; already, I feel a Lamartinian longing pervade my whole being. There is one point, though, on which Jacques and I cannot come to an agreement.

Jacques wishes me, at thirty-five, to enter the French Academy, but I refuse vehemently. Old dried up Academy! It is antiquated, and out of fashion; a confounded old Egyptian Pyramid.

"All the more reason for your joining it," said Jacques. "You will put a little young blood in the veins of those effete old fellows. And then our mother would be so pleased, only think."

What could I say to that? Mme. Eyssette's name is an unanswerable argument, and I must resign myself to putting on the green coat. I consent to the Academy, and if my colleagues bore me too much, I shall do like Mérimée and never go to the meetings.

Night has fallen during this discussion, and the bells of Saint-Germain chime joyously, as if to celebrate Daniel Eyssette's entrance into the French Academy. — "Come to dinner!" says my Mother Jacques, and, very proud of being seen with an academician, he carries me off to a creamery in the Rue Saint-Bénoît.

It is a little restaurant for the poor, and has a table-d'hôte at the back for the habitual customers. We sit down in the first room, in the midst of threadbare famished people, who scrape their plates silently. "They are almost all of them men of letters," said Jacques to me in a whisper. I cannot help making some melancholy reflections on the subject to myself, but I take care not to communicate them to Jacques, for fear of cooling his enthusiasm.

The dinner is a merry one. M. Daniel Eyssette

(of the French Academy) is in high spirits and has an excellent appetite. When the meal is over the two hasten back to climb their tower; and while the academician smokes his pipe, astride of the window-sill, Jacques sits at his table, absorbed in a complicated sum that seems to trouble him greatly. He bites his nails, moves restlessly about in his chair, counts upon his fingers; then, suddenly, he jumps up with a cry of triumph.

"Bravo! I have succeeded."

"In what, Jacques?"

"In settling our budget, my boy. And I can tell you it was n't easy. Think of it! Sixty francs a month for us both to live on."

"Why sixty? I thought you had a hundred from the Marquis."

"Yes, but I must send forty francs out of that to Mme. Eyssette, for the rebuilding of the hearth. There are sixty francs left. We pay fifteen francs for our room; as you see, that 's not dear, only I must make the bed myself."

"I will make it too, Jacques."

"No, no; it would not be proper for an academician. But let us return to the budget. Fifteen francs for our room, five francs for charcoal; — only five francs, because I go myself to get it every month at the depots where they sell it; there are forty francs left. Let us say thirty francs for your food. You will dine at the creamery where we went this evening; it is fifteen sous without dessert, and you saw that it was pretty

good. There are five sous left for your lunch, is that enough?"

"Of course it is."

"We have still ten francs. I allow seven francs for washing. What a pity I have no time! If I had, I should go to the boat myself. Three francs remain that I shall use in this way: thirty sous for my lunches; oh, yes indeed! you know I get a good dinner with the Marquis every day and don't need such substantial lunches as you. The last thirty sous are for small outlays, tobacco, stamps, and other unforeseen expenses. That just makes up our sixty francs. Don't you think I have reckoned well?"

And Jacques, full of enthusiasm begins to skip about the room; then, he stops, all at once, in consternation.

"Oh, dear me! I must go over the budget again, — I have forgotten something."

"What 's that?"

"The candle. How can you work in the evening without a candle? It is a necessary expense, and will come at least to five francs a month. How shall I get hold of those five francs? The money I send home is sacred and under no pretext — Oh, here I have it! March is coming, and with it, spring, warmth and sunshine."

"Well, Jacques?"

"Well, Daniel, when it is warm, we don't need coal: we change the five francs' worth of coal into five francs' worth of candles, and the problem is solved. I was surely born to be minister of

finance. What do you say? This time, the budget stands on its legs, and I think we have forgotten nothing. Of course, there is still the question of shoes and clothes, but I know what I am going to do. My evenings are always free after eight o'clock and I mean to look for a place as bookkeeper with some small tradesman. I am sure Pierrotte will find one for me easily."

"Come now, Jacques, you seem to be very intimate with Pierrotte. Do you go there often?"

"Yes, very often. They have music in the evenings."

"What, is Pierrotte a musician?"

"No, not he; his daughter is."

"His daughter! He has a daughter then? Ah, ha, Jacques! Is Mdlle. Pierrotte pretty?"

"Oh! You are asking too many questions at once, little Daniel. I will answer you another time. It is late now; let us go to bed."

And to hide the embarrassment my questions caused him, Jacques begins to turn down the sheets of the bed with the care of an old maid.

It is a single iron bedstead, exactly like the one we used both to sleep in at Lyons in the Rue Lanterne.

"Do you remember, Jacques, our little bed in the Rue Lanterne, when we read novels on the sly, and our father shouted to us from his room, at the top of his voice: 'Put out your light directly, or I will get up.'"

Jacques remembered that, and also many other things. In the midst of their recollections, mid-

night strikes at Saint-Germain, and the boys have not yet thought of going to sleep.

"Come, good-night," says Jacques, resolutely.

But in five minutes I hear him burst out laughing under the coverlet.

"What are you laughing at, Jacques?"

"I am laughing at the Abbé Micou; you know, the Abbé Micou at the school for choir-boys. Don't you remember him?"

"I should think I did!"

And here we are laughing and laughing, and chattering and chattering. This time, it is I who am reasonable, and say:

"We must go to sleep."

But a moment afterwards, I begin again:

"And Rouget, Jacques; Rouget at the factory. Can you remember him?"

Thereupon, fresh bursts of laughter, and endless talk.

Suddenly a loud rap shakes the wall on my side of the bed. General consternation.

"It is the White-Cuckoo," whispers Jacques in my ear.

"The White-Cuckoo! What's that?"

"Hush! not so loud. The White-Cuckoo is our neighbor, and she probably objects to our keeping her awake."

"Tell me, Jacques! What an odd name our neighbor has! The White-Cuckoo! Is she young?"

"You may judge for yourself, my boy. Sooner or later you will meet her on the stairs. But in

the meanwhile, let us go to sleep quickly, or otherwise the White-Cuckoo may be angry again."

Forthwith, Jacques blows out the candle, and M. Daniel Eyssette (of the French Academy) goes to sleep on his brother's shoulder as he used to do when he was ten years old.

CHAPTER V.

THE WHITE-CUCKOO AND THE LADY OF THE FIRST FLOOR.

ON the Place of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, in the corner where the church is, to the left, and on the level of the roofs, there is a little window that makes my heart ache every time I look at it. It is the window of our old room; and, even to-day, when I pass that way, it seems to me that the Daniel of that time is still up there, seated at his desk opposite the window-pane, smiling with pity as he sees in the street the Daniel of to-day, sad and already bent in stature.

Ah, old clock of Saint-Germain-des-Prés! What happy hours you struck for me when I lived up there with my Mother Jacques! Could not you strike again for me some of those hours of youth and valour? I was so happy, then, and I worked with so much zest!

In the morning we rose at daylight. Jacques immediately attended to the housekeeping. He went to fetch the water, swept the room, and put my table in order. I myself had not the right to touch anything. If I said: "Jacques, will you let me help you?" Jacques burst out laughing: "You don't mean it, Daniel. And how about the lady

of the first floor?" These few words, big with allusion, shut my mouth.

This is the reason:

During the first days of our life together, it was I who undertook to go down to fetch water from the court. At any other hour of the day, I should not have dared, but in the morning, everybody was still asleep and there was no risk to my vanity of my being met on the stairs, carrying a pitcher. I ran down as soon as I woke, half-dressed. The court-yard was deserted at that hour. Sometimes, a groom in a red jacket was cleaning his harness near the pump. It was the coachman of the lady who lived on the first floor, a very elegant young creole, who attracted much attention in the house. This man's presence was enough to disconcert me; when he was there, I felt mortified, and, pumping as fast as possible, went back with my pitcher half-filled. Once upstairs, I thought myself very foolish, but this did not prevent me from being quite as embarrassed next day if I caught sight of the red jacket in the court-yard. Now, one morning that I had had the good luck to avoid the formidable jacket, I was going gayly upstairs with my pitcher full, when, as I reached the first floor, I found myself face to face with a lady coming down. It was the lady of the first floor.

Erect and haughty, her eyes bent over a book, she was walking slowly along, in a floating mass of silken draperies. At first sight, she seemed beautiful to me, although a trifle pale, and what

especially struck me was a little white scar in the corner of her mouth, just above the lip. As the lady passed in front of me, she lifted her eyes. I was standing against the wall, flushed and ashamed, with my pitcher in my hand. Only think of it! To be caught thus like a water-carrier, uncombed, dripping, my neck bare, and my shirt half-open — what a humiliation! I could have wished for the earth to swallow me. The lady looked straight in my face for a moment, with the air of an indulgent queen, and then, smiling slightly, passed on. When I reached our room I was furious. I told my adventure to Jacques, who made a great deal of fun of my vanity; but the next day he took the pitcher, and went down without saying anything. After that, he continued to go down every morning, and, in spite of my remorse, I let him do it. I was too much afraid of meeting the lady of the first floor again.

When we had finished with the housekeeping, Jacques went off to his Marquis, and I did not see him again till evening. I passed my days all alone by myself with the Muse, or with what I was pleased to call the Muse. From morning till night the window remained open in front of my table, and there, from morning till night I strung rhymes together. From time to time, a house-sparrow came to drink from my gutter; after looking at me saucily for a moment, he went to tell the others what I was doing, and I heard the noise of their little claws on the slates. The bells of Saint-Germain, too, made me visits, several times a day. I

liked to have them come to see me. They entered clamorously through the window, and filled the room with music. Sometimes the glad and crazy chimes flung in their semiquavers, and again, the notes of solemn melancholy knells fell one by one like tears. Then there were the *Angelus:* the midday *Angelus*, an archangel clothed in shining raiment, who came to me resplendent with light; and the evening *Angelus*, a sad seraph who slipped down a ray of moonlight, and made the room chill as he shook out his great wings.

I received no other visits save those of the sparrows, and the bells. Who should have come to see me? No one knew me. At the creamery in the Rue Saint-Bénoît, I was always careful to sit at a little table apart from the rest; I ate quickly, with my eyes on my plate; then when I had finished my meal, I took my hat furtively, and went home with all speed. I never had a walk or any kind of amusement; I did not even go to hear the music at the Luxembourg. This abnormal shyness, which I had inherited from my mother, was still farther increased by the dilapidation of my costume, and the wretched india-rubbers that we had not been able to replace. I was afraid and ashamed in the streets; I should have liked never to leave my tower. Sometimes, however, on those charming dewy evenings of spring in Paris, I met troops of students in high spirits, and the sight of them going off, arm in arm, with their broad hats, pipes and sweethearts, gave me some new ideas. Then I would fly up my five flights very quickly, light

my candle, and set furiously to work until Jacques' arrival.

When Jacques came, the aspect of the room changed. It was all cheer, noise and stir. We sang, laughed, and asked each other news of the day. "Have you done good work?" Jacques would say to me; "is your poem progressing?" Then he related some new invention of his original Marquis, drew out of his pocket some sweets he had saved from the dessert for me, enjoying the pleasure with which I ate them. After this, I would return to my rhyming-table. Jacques walked up and down the room several times, and when he thought me quite absorbed, slipped out, saying: "Since you are working, I will go *over there* for a minute." *Over there* meant at Pierrotte's, and if you have not already guessed why Jacques went *over there* so often, you must be very stupid. I understood it all, from the first day, merely from seeing him smoothe his hair before the glass and tie his cravat three or four times over, before he started; but to avoid embarrassing him, I pretended not to suspect anything, and was content with laughing to myself as I thought of all this.

When Jacques had gone, I devoted myself to my rhymes. At that hour there was no longer the slightest noise; my friends the sparrows and the *Angelus* had all gone to bed. It was a complete *tête-à-tête* with the Muse. Toward nine o'clock, I heard a step on the stairs, — a little wooden staircase that served as a continuation to the grand one. — It was Mdlle. White-Cuckoo, our

neighbor, going to her room. From that moment I could work no more. My mind wandered shamelessly to my neighbor, and would not leave her. Who could the mysterious White-Cuckoo be? It was impossible for me to obtain the least information about her. If I asked Jacques, he would put on a little sly look and say:

"What? Have n't you met our glorious neighbor yet?" But he never explained farther. I thought: "He does not want me to know her; she is probably a grisette of the Latin Quarter." This idea kindled my fancy. I imagined a fresh, young, joyous thing, — a grisette in fact. There was nothing about her that did not seem to me full of charm, even to the name of White-Cuckoo, one of those fond pet-names like Musette or Mimi-Pinson. At all events, my neighbor was a very demure and well-behaved Musette, a Musette of Nanterre, who came home every evening at the same hour and always alone. This I knew, because on several consecutive evenings, at the time of her arrival I had applied my ear to the partition. I heard invariably the same thing: at first, the sound of a bottle uncorked and corked repeatedly; then, after a minute, bang! the fall of a very heavy body on the floor; and immediately, a little thin, very shrill voice, like that of a sick cricket, singing an unknown air that consisted of three notes, sad enough to make one cry. There were words to this air, but I could not distinguish them, except these incomprehensible syllables: *Tolocototignan, tolocototignan !* which recurred at intervals in the

song, as a refrain more accentuated than the rest. This singular music lasted about an hour; then at one last *tolocototignan*, the voice stopped suddenly short, and I heard nothing more but slow and heavy breathing. All this puzzled me a good deal.

One morning my Mother Jacques, who had been fetching the water, came quickly into the room with a very mysterious air, and approaching me, said in a whisper:

"If you want to see our neighbor, — hush, she is there."

At a bound, I was out on the landing. Jacques had told the truth — the White-Cuckoo was in her room with the door wide open, and at last I could have a view of her. Oh God! it was only a vision, but what a vision! Imagine a little attic entirely bare, a straw mattress on the floor, a bottle of brandy on the mantelpiece, and above the mattress an enormous and mysterious horse-shoe, hanging on the wall like a vessel for holy water. Now, in the middle of this kennel, conceive of a horrible negress, with big eyes like mother-of-pearl, and hair short, woolly and frizzled like the fleece of a black sheep, clad only in a faded night-jacket and old red petticoat, with nothing over them. It was thus I first saw my neighbor the White-Cuckoo, the White-Cuckoo of my dreams, sister of Mimi-Pinson and Bernerette. Oh, you romantic country bumpkin, let this be a lesson to you!

"Well," said Jacques, as I returned, "well, what

do you think of" — he did not finish his phrase and burst into a loud laugh at my air of discomfiture. I had the wit to do likewise, and there we were, laughing with all our might in each other's faces, neither of us able to speak. At this moment, through the crack of the door left ajar, a big black head slipped into the room and disappeared almost immediately, calling to us: "White men laugh at niggers, not nice." You may fancy whether we laughed louder than ever.

When our merriment had somewhat subsided, Jacques informed me that White-Cuckoo the negress was in the service of the lady of the first floor; in the house she was accused of sorcery, in proof of which there was the horse-shoe, symbol of the Vaudoux worship, hanging above her mattress. It was also said that every evening, when her mistress was out, the White-Cuckoo shut herself up in her attic, drank brandy till she fell down dead drunk, and sang negro songs for part of the night. This explained to me the mysterious sounds that had come from my neighbor's room: the uncorked bottle, the falling upon the floor, and the monotonous tune of three notes. As to the *tolocotignan*, it was a sort of imitative refrain, very common among the negroes of the Cape, something like our *lon, lan, la;* the black Pierre Duponts put it into all their songs.

Need I say that from that day the proximity of the White-Cuckoo was less distracting to me. When she came upstairs in the evening, my heart no longer beat so fast, and I never disturbed my-

self to go and glue my ear to the partition. Sometimes, however, in the silence of the night, the *tolocototignans* reached me at my table, and I felt a certain vague sense of discomfort in listening to that sad refrain; it was as if I foresaw the part it was to play in my life.

Meanwhile my Mother Jacques found a place at fifty francs a month as book-keeper in the employ of a small iron-merchant, to whom he was to go every evening, after leaving the Marquis. The poor boy told me this good news, half glad and half sorry. "How shall you be able to go *over there?*" I asked him at once. He answered, with his eyes full of tears: "I have my Sundays." And from that time, as he had said, he went *over there* on Sundays only, but it certainly cost him dear.

What was there so attractive *over there* that my Mother Jacques had so much at heart? I should not have been sorry to know, but unfortunately he never proposed to take me with him; and I was too proud to ask him to do so. Besides, how could I go anywhere, with my india-rubbers? However, one Sunday, as Jacques was starting to go to the Pierrottes', he said with some slight embarrassment:

"Should n't you like to go *over there* with me, little Daniel? You would surely give them a great deal of pleasure."

"My dear fellow, you are joking!"

"Yes, I know; the Pierrottes' parlor is not the place for a poet. They are just a lot of tiresome old tradespeople."

"Oh, it is n't on that account, Jacques; it is only because of my clothes."

"Yes, that is true; it did not occur to me," said Jacques.

And he went off, enchanted to have a genuine reason for not taking me.

He had hardly reached the foot of the stairs, when he turned round and ran up to me again, quite out of breath.

"Daniel," said he, "if you had a presentable hat and pair of shoes, should you go with me to the Pierrottes' ?"

"Why not?"

"Very well, come; I will buy all you need, and then we can go *over there*."

I looked at him, stupefied. "It is the end of the month, and I have the money," he added to convince me. I was so delighted with the idea of having new apparel that I did not observe Jacques' emotion, or the strange tone in which he spoke. I only thought of all that later. At the moment, I flung my arms round his neck, and we set out for the Pierrottes', passing by the Palais-Royal, where I was fitted out at the shop of an old-clothes dealer.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROMANCE OF PIERROTTE.

IF anybody had told Pierrotte at twenty that he would one day succeed M. Lalouette in the china business, that he would have two hundred thousand francs at his notary's — Pierrotte with a notary! — and a superb shop at the corner of the Passage du Saumon, it would have astonished him very much.

At twenty, Pierrotte had never left his native village; he wore big sabots made from the pine of the Cévennes, could not speak a word of French, and earned a hundred crowns a year by breeding silkworms; besides this, he was a robust fellow and a fine dancer, fond of laughing and singing patriotic songs, but always decently, and without prejudice to the tavern-keepers. Like all fellows of his age, Pierrotte had a sweetheart, for whom he waited every Sunday, as the people came out from vespers, to take with him for a dance under the mulberry-trees. Pierrotte's sweetheart was named Roberte, the tall Roberte. She was a handsome lass of eighteen, an orphan like him, and poor as he was, but she knew well how to read and write, which is rarer than a dowry in the villages of the Cévennes. Pierrotte was very

proud of his Roberte, and expected to marry her as soon as he should draw his lot; but on the day of the conscription, though the poor fellow had dipped his hand three times in holy water before approaching the urn, he drew out No. 4. He had to go. What despair! Luckily for him, Mme. Eyssette who had been nursed, and partly brought up by Pierrotte's mother, came to the assistance of her foster-brother, and lent him two thousand francs to buy a substitute. The Eyssettes were rich at that time! — So the joyful Pierrotte did not have to go, and was able to marry his Roberte; but as these good people desired above everything to pay back Mme. Eyssette's money, and as they could never succeed in doing so if they remained in their native place, they had the courage to exile themselves and went to Paris to seek their fortunes.

For a year our mountaineers were heard of no more; then, one fine morning, Mme. Eyssette received a touching letter signed "Pierrotte and his wife," that contained three hundred francs, the first-fruits of their economies. The second year, there was a new letter from "Pierrotte and his wife," with an enclosure of five hundred francs. The third year nothing came. They had probably not been successful in their affairs. The fourth year, there was a third letter from "Pierrotte and his wife" with a last enclosure of twelve hundred francs and blessings for the Eyssette family. Sad to say, when this letter reached us, we were completely ruined; the factory had just been sold and

we were about to go into exile. In her grief, Mme. Eyssette forgot to answer "Pierrotte and his wife." After that, we had no more news of them until Jacques went to Paris, and found the worthy Pierrotte, — Pierrotte without his wife, alas! — installed at the desk of the former house of Lalouette.

Nothing could be less poetic or more touching than the history of his prosperity. On their arrival in Paris, Pierrotte's wife had bravely set herself to doing housework. The first place she took was with the Lalouettes. These were rich tradespeople, miserly almost to madness, who had never been willing to employ either a clerk or a servant, because they wanted to do everything themselves. ("Sir, I made my own trousers myself, until I was fifty!" old Lalouette was accustomed to say proudly.) Only in their old age would they permit themselves the extravagant luxury of a maid-of-all-work at twelve francs a month. God knows that the work she did was well worth the money! There was the shop, the back-shop, an apartment on the fourth floor, and two buckets of water to fill every morning. Only a woman fresh from the Cévennes would have accepted such conditions; but she was young, active, and inured to labor, and her back was strong as that of a young heifer; in a twinkling she despatched the rough work, and, besides, threw her pretty smile into the bargain, which alone was worth more than twelve francs to the old people. By dint of her good-nature and prowess, this

courageous young woman succeeded in winning over her employers. They began to take an interest in her, and made her tell them about herself; then one fine day, of his own accord — for the dryest hearts sometimes burst into sudden bloom, — old Lalouette offered to lend a little money to Pierrotte, so that he could go into business and follow out his own plan.

This was Pierrotte's plan: he bought an old ass and a cart, and went from one end of Paris to the other crying with all his might: "Get rid of all you don't want!" Our sly mountaineer did not sell, he bought things. What did he buy? Everything. Broken vessels and bottles, old iron, papers, worn-out furniture not worth selling, old finery that no shopkeeper would look at; all sorts of things of no value, that people keep at home out of habit or carelessness, because they do not know what to do with them; in short, everything that is a nuisance. Pierrotte turned up his nose at nothing; he bought all that was offered him, or, at least, he accepted it, for often things were not sold but given away, so as to be got rid of. "Get rid of all you don't want!"

Pierrotte was very popular in the quarter of Montmartre. Like all peddlers who are anxious to make themselves heard in the hubbub of the street, he had adopted a peculiar and personal series of cries that the housekeepers learned to know well. First, there was the formidable "Get rid of all you don't want," at the top of his lungs; and then, in a drawling whimpering tone, long

conversations with his ass, his Anastagille, as he called her. He thought he was saying Anastasie. "Come along, Anastagille; come, get along, my girl," and the docile Anastagille followed with her head down, keeping by the side of the pavement with a melancholy air. From every house, somebody called: "Here, here, Anastagille!" and the cart filled, till it was a sight to see. When it was full to overflowing, Anastagille and Pierrotte went to Montmartre to deposit their cargo with a wholesale rag-dealer, who paid well for all this rubbish that had cost nothing, or almost nothing.

Pierrotte did not make his fortune by this singular trade, but he made a good living by it. The very first year, they returned the Lalouettes' money and sent three hundred francs to Mademoiselle, — it was thus they had called Mme. Eyssette when she was a young girl, and they had never been able to make up their minds to speak of her in any other way. But the third year was not a lucky one. It was 1830. In vain Pierrotte shouted: "Get rid of what you don't want!" for the Parisians, who were occupied in getting rid of an old king they did not want, turned a deaf ear to Pierrotte's cries, and let him shout himself hoarse in the streets; so, every evening, the cart returned home empty. To cap the climax of misfortune, Anastagille died. It was then that the old Lalouettes, who were beginning to be unable to do everything for themselves, proposed to take Pierrotte as shopman in their employ. Pierrotte accepted the position, but did not long retain

these modest functions. Ever since their arrival in Paris, his wife had been giving him, every evening, lessons in reading and writing; he could already manage a letter, and expressed himself in French in a way to make himself understood. When he entered the service of the Lalouettes, he redoubled his efforts, joining a class of adults in which he studied arithmetic. His progress was such that at the end of a few months he was able to take his place at the desk, instead of M. Lalouette then nearly blind, and to sell for Mme. Lalouette, whose old legs could no longer keep pace with her courage. Meanwhile, Mdlle. Pierrotte came into the world, and from that time, Pierrotte's fortune kept on increasing. First, he had an interest in the business of the Lalouettes, and later, he became their partner; then, one fine day, old Lalouette, who had completely lost his sight, retired from trade, and sold out to Pierrotte, who paid him in annual instalments. With one lucky stroke he enlarged the business to such a degree that in three years he repaid the Lalouettes, and found himself, unencumbered with debt, at the head of a handsome shop, with an excellent custom. Just then, as if she had waited to die until her husband no longer needed her, Roberte fell ill and died of exhaustion.

This is Pierrotte's romance, as Jacques related it to me that evening, while we were walking to the Passage du Saumon; and, as the way was long, — we had taken the longest way to show the Parisians my new coat, — I understood our friend thoroughly

before I reached his house. I knew the good Pierrotte had two idols he would not allow to be touched, his daughter and M. Lalouette. I knew also that he was rather garrulous and tiresome to listen to, as he spoke slowly, casting about for his phrases, spluttered, and could not say three consecutive words without adding:

"If I may be allowed to say so."

This was due to a particular cause: the peasant from the Cévennes had never become accustomed to our language. As all his thoughts came to his lips in the patois of Languedoc, he was obliged to turn this dialect word by word into French, and the repetitions of "If I may be allowed to say so" with which he garnished his conversation, gave him time to accomplish this little task in his own mind. As Jacques said, Pierrotte did not speak, he translated. As to Mdlle. Pierrotte, all I could learn of her was that she was sixteen years old, and that her name was Camille; nothing more, for on this chapter Jacques' lips were sealed.

It was near nine o'clock when we entered the shop that had formerly belonged to the Lalouettes. They were shutting it up. Bolts, shutters, and bars of iron, a formidable apparatus for closing, were lying about in heaps on the pavement, in front of the half-open door; the gas was extinguished, and all the shop was in shadow, except the desk, on which a porcelain lamp stood, lighting up piles of coin, and a large, red, laughing face. In the room behind the shop, some one was playing the flute.

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"Good-evening, Pierrotte," cried Jacques, taking up his position before the desk. (I stood beside him in the lamplight.) "Good-evening, Pierrotte."

Pierrotte, who was doing his accounts, lifted his eyes at Jacques' voice; then, catching sight of me, he uttered a cry, clasped his hands, and stayed there stupidly gaping at me with his mouth open.

"Well?" said Jacques, triumphantly, "what did I tell you?"

"Oh, my God! my God!" murmured Pierrotte, "it seems to me — if I may be allowed to say so — it seems to me that I see her."

"Especially the eyes," resumed Jacques; "look at the eyes, Pierrotte."

"And the chin, Monsieur Jacques, the chin with a dimple in it," replied Pierrotte, who had removed the screen from the lamp, in order to see me better.

I could understand nothing of all this. They were both looking at me, winking and making signs to each other. Suddenly Pierrotte rose, came out from behind the desk, and approached me with open arms.

"With your permission, Monsieur Daniel, I must kiss you. If I may be allowed to say so, I think I am kissing Mademoiselle."

This last word explained everything. At that time, I was much like my mother, and this resemblance was still more striking to Pierrotte who had not seen Mademoiselle for some twenty-five years. The good man could not tire of shak-

ing my hands and embracing me, looking at me all the time with his large eyes full of tears; afterwards, he began to talk to us of our mother, of the two thousand francs, of his Roberte, his Camille, his Anastagille, and all this at such length, and with so many periods, that we should still be — if I may be allowed to say so — standing up in the shop, listening to him, if Jacques had not said to him in an impatient tone:

"How about your accounts, Pierrotte?"

Pierrotte stopped short. He was a little confused at having talked so long.

"You are right, Monsieur Jacques, I am talking on and on, and the little girl — if I may be allowed to say so, — the little girl will scold me for coming up so late."

"Is Camille up there?" asked Jacques, with a little air of indifference.

"Yes, yes, Monsieur Jacques, the little girl is up there. She is pining — if I may be allowed to say so — really pining to make M. Daniel's acquaintance. Go up and see her; I will do my accounts and join you there — if I may be allowed to say so."

Without listening to any more, Jacques took me by the arm, and drew me toward the back room where some one was playing the flute. Pierrotte's shop was large and well-furnished. In the shadow, I could see glittering the swelling sides of decanters, the opalescent globes, and the pale gold of Bohemian glass, the great crystal cups, the round soup-tureens, and to right and left, high piles of

plates reaching to the ceiling. It was the palace of the Porcelain fairy seen at night. In the room at the back, a gas jet, half turned on, was still burning, letting a little languid tongue of flame escape. We passed through the room, and there, seated on the edge of a divan, was a tall fair-haired youth, playing in a melancholy manner upon the flute. As Jacques went by, he gave a very short "Good-evening," and the fair-haired youth replied with two very short notes from the flute, which must be the way flutes have of greeting one another when they are angry.

"He is the clerk," said Jacques, when we were on the stairs. "That tall yellow-haired fellow bores us to death by always playing on the flute. Do you care for the flute, Daniel?"

I wanted to ask: "Does the little girl care for it?" But I was afraid of hurting his feelings, and answered very seriously: "No, Jacques, I don't care for the flute."

Pierrotte's apartment was on the fourth floor, in the same house as the shop. Mdlle. Camille, too aristocratic to show herself in the shop, remained above, and saw her father only at meal-times. "Oh, you will see!" said Jacques as we went up, "it is quite on the footing of a fine house. Camille has a companion, a widow, Mme. Tribou, who never leaves her. I don't quite know where this Mme. Tribou comes from, but Pierrotte knows her, and insists that she is a very deserving person. Ring, Daniel, for here we are!" I rang; a woman from the Cévennes in a large cap came to the door,

and, smiling at Jacques as at an old acquaintance, showed us into the drawing-room.

When we entered, Mdlle. Pierrotte was at the piano. Two old and rather stout ladies, Mme. Lalouette and the widow-lady, Mme. Tribou, the very deserving person, were playing cards in a corner. They all rose when they saw us. There was a moment of bustle and confusion; then, after greetings were exchanged, and introductions made, Jacques asked Camille — he called her Camille without ceremony — to sit down again at the piano, and the very deserving person profited by his request to continue her game with Mme. Lalouette. Jacques and I sat down on each side of Mdlle. Pierrotte, who talked and laughed with us, while her little fingers were flying over the piano. I watched her as she was speaking. She was not pretty. Her complexion was pink and white, her ears small, and her hair fine, but her cheeks were too plump, and her health too blooming; moreover, she had red hands, and the somewhat frigid graces of a boarding-school miss at home on a holiday. She was the true daughter of Pierrotte, a wild flower of the mountains that had grown up behind a shop window in the Passage du Saumon.

Such, at least was my first impression; but all at once, at a word of mine, Mdlle. Pierrotte, who had been looking down until then, raised her eyes slowly upon me, and, as if by magic, the little bourgeoise disappeared; I could see nothing but her eyes, two great, black, dazzling eyes that I recognized immediately.

O miracle! They were the same eyes that had shone so sweetly for me, far away, within the chill walls of the old school; the black eyes of the fairy in spectacles; in short, the black eyes. — I thought I was dreaming. I wanted to cry to them, "Is it you, beautiful black eyes? Do I meet you again in the face of another?" If I could but express how surely they were the same! It was impossible to make a mistake. The same lashes, the same splendor, the same black and smothered fire. What folly to believe there could be two such pairs of eyes in the world! And the proof that they were really the black eyes themselves and not other black eyes like them, is that they too had recognized me, and we were, no doubt, about to resume one of our pretty mute dialogues of the old time, when I heard, near me, almost in my ear, a noise of little teeth, like those of a mouse, nibbling. I turned my head at this, and saw in an armchair, at the angle of the piano, a person whom I had not noticed before. It was a tall, thin, pale old man, with a bird-like head, retreating forehead, pointed nose, and round, lifeless eyes, set too far from the nose, almost on the temples. Except for the bit of sugar the old fellow was holding and pecking from time to time, I might have thought him asleep. A little troubled by this apparition, I made the old phantom a deep bow, which he did not return. "He does not see you," said Jacques; "he is blind. It is old Lalouette."

"He is well-named," I thought, and to avoid

seeing that horrible old bird-headed man, I turned quickly toward the black eyes; but alas! the charm was broken, and the black eyes had vanished. There was nothing in their stead, save a little bourgeoise sitting stiffly on the piano-stool.

Just then, the door of the drawing-room opened and Pierrotte made a noisy entrance. The man with the flute came behind him with his flute under his arm. When Jacques saw him, he let fly at him a deadly look that was fit to fell a buffalo; but it must have missed him, for the flute-player did not blench.

"Well, little girl," said Pierrotte, kissing his daughter on both cheeks, "are you pleased? They have brought you your Daniel; and what do you think of him? He is very nice, is n't he? If I may be allowed to say so, he is the perfect picture of Mademoiselle."

Thereupon, the good Pierrotte began again the scene in the shop, and drew me by force into the middle of the room, so that everybody could see Mademoiselle's eyes, Mademoiselle's nose, and Mademoiselle's dimpled chin. This exhibition embarrassed me very much. Mme. Lalouette and the very deserving person interrupted their game, and leaning back in their armchairs, examined me with the greatest coolness, criticising or praising aloud this or that portion of my person exactly as if I were a little plump chicken offered for sale at the market of la Vallée. Between ourselves, the very deserving person appeared to understand such young fowl very well.

Happily, Jacques put a stop to my misery, by asking Mdlle. Pierrotte to play us something. "That 's it, let us play something," said the flute-player with alacrity, advancing, holding out his flute. Jacques cried: "No, no; no duet; we don't want the flute!" Whereupon the flute-player darted at him a little light-blue glance, poisoned like the arrow of a savage, but Jacques never winced, and kept on saying: "We don't want the flute!" Jacques carried the day in the end, and without an accompaniment from the flute, Mdlle. Pierrotte played one of those well-known pieces full of tremolo, called *Reveries of Rosellen.* While she played, Pierrotte wept with admiration, and Jacques was in an ecstasy; silently, but with his flute between his teeth, the flute-player beat time with his shoulders, and played internally.

When the *Rosellen* was over, Mdlle. Pierrotte turned toward me; "And you, Monsieur Daniel," said she, lowering her eyes, "are not we going to hear you? You are a poet, I know."

"And a good poet, too," said Jacques, that indiscreet Jacques. You may imagine I was not tempted to recite verses before all those Amalekites. If the black eyes had only been there; but no, for an hour the black eyes had been extinguished, and I sought for them about me in vain. You ought to have heard the easy tone in which I answered the young girl:

"Excuse me this evening, Mademoiselle; I have not brought my lyre with me."

"Don't forget to bring it with you next time,"

said kind old Pierrotte, who took my metaphor seriously. The poor man really believed I had a lyre, and played on it as his clerk played on the flute. Ah, Jacques was right in warning me that he was going to introduce me to an odd society!

Toward eleven o'clock, tea was served, and Mdlle. Pierrotte walked to and fro through the drawing-room, offering the sugar, pouring out the milk, with a smile on her lips and her little finger in the air. It was in this part of the evening that I again saw the black eyes. They suddenly appeared before me, luminous and sympathetic; then they suffered a new eclipse before I had time to speak with them. Then only I observed something, and that was that in Mdlle. Pierrotte there were two entirely distinct beings: first, Mdlle. Pierrotte, a little bourgeoise, with her hair brushed smooth, well fitted to rule over the house of Lalouette's successor; and then, the black eyes, those great, poetic eyes that opened like two velvet flowers, and had only to appear in order to transfigure that company of burlesque shopkeepers. I should not have cared to have Mdlle. Pierrotte for anything in the world; but the black eyes, oh, the black eyes!

Finally the hour came to break up. Mme. Lalouette made the move. She wrapped her husband in a great plaid, and carried him off under her arm like an old mummy done up in bands. After they had gone, Pierrotte kept us a long time on the landing, making interminable speeches.

"Ah, Monsieur Daniel! Now that you know

the house, I hope we shall see you here. We never have many people, but very select people, if I may be allowed to say so. First, M. and Mme. Lalouette, my old employers; then Mme. Tribou, a very deserving person, with whom you can talk; also my clerk, a good fellow who sometimes plays to us on the flute. If I may be allowed to say so, you can play duets together, and that will be delightful."

I objected shyly that I was very busy, and perhaps could not come as often as I might like.

This made him laugh.

"Come now, busy, Monsieur Daniel! I know what kind of business you fellows have in the Latin Quarter. If I may be allowed to say so, there must be some grisette about there."

"The truth is," said Jacques, laughing too, "that the White-Cuckoo has her share of attractions."

The name of White-Cuckoo filled the measure of Pierrotte's mirth.

"What do you say, Monsieur Jacques? The White-Cuckoo? She is called the White-Cuckoo? Ha! ha! ha! Look at that boy, and at his age too!" He stopped short as he noticed his daughter was listening to him; but even when we reached the bottom of the stairs, we still heard his loud laugh that shook the banisters.

"Well, what do you think of them?" asked Jacques, as soon as we were in the street.

"My dear fellow, M. Lalouette is very unattractive, but Mdlle. Pierrotte is charming."

"Is n't she?" said the poor lover, with so much vivacity that I could not help laughing.

"Come, Jacques, you have betrayed yourself," said I, taking his hand.

That evening, we walked till very late along the quays. At our feet, the silent black river rolled along thousands of little stars like pearls. The chains of the big boats clashed. It was pleasant to walk quietly in the shadow and hear Jacques talk of love. He loved with his whole soul, but he was not loved in return; he knew he was not loved in return.

"Then Jacques, she must love another, you think?"

"No, Daniel, I think that until this evening, she has never loved anybody."

"Until this evening, Jacques; what do you mean?"

"Oh! Everybody loves you, Daniel, and perhaps she may love you, too."

Poor dear Jacques! With what a sad resigned air he said that! To reassure him, I began to laugh aloud, louder than I cared to do.

"The deuce, my dear fellow, how you are going on! I must be very irresistible or Mdlle. Pierrotte very inflammable. But no; cheer up, Mother Jacques. Mdlle. Pierrotte is as far from my heart as I am from hers; and you need have no fears of me, that 's sure."

I spoke sincerely, as I said this. Mdlle. Pierrotte did not exist for me. The black eyes, however, were quite a different thing.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RED ROSE AND THE BLACK EYES.

AFTER this first visit to Pierrotte's house, some time elapsed without my going *over there* again. Jacques' continued faithful to his Sunday pilgrimages, and every time he invented a new way of tying his cravat that was full of allurement. Jacques' cravat was a poem, a poem of ardent but restrained love; something like a mystical bouquet of the East, one of those nosegays of emblematic flowers which the Pashas offer their lady loves, and which they know how to make express every shade of passion.

If I had been a woman, Jacques' cravat, with its many, infinitely varied knots, would have touched me more than a declaration. But, must I say it? Women do not understand such things. Every Sunday, before setting out, the poor lover never failed to say: "I am going *over there*, Daniel; are you coming too?" And I answered invariably: "No, Jacques, I am working." Then he went off very quickly, and I was left alone, bending over my rhyming-table.

On my part, I had made a resolution, a very serious resolution, not to go to Pierrotte's any more. I was afraid of the black eyes. I had

said to myself: "If you see them again, you are lost;" but though I held good in my determination not to see them again, they never left my mind, those great wonderful black eyes. I encountered them on every side, I thought of them always, working and sleeping, and on all my blank-books you might have seen large eyes drawn in ink, with tremendously long lashes. It was an obsession.

Ah! when my Mother Jacques, his eyes bright with pleasure, went skipping off to the Passage du Saumon, with a new knot in his cravat, God knows how many mad longings I had to race downstairs after him, crying to him to wait for me. But I did not, for something within me warned me that it would be wrong for me to go *over there*, and I had the courage withal to stay at my table and say: "No, thank you, Jacques, I must work."

This lasted for some time. In the long run, with the help of the Muse, I should no doubt have succeeded in banishing the black eyes from my brain, but I am sorry to say I had the imprudence to see them once again. It was all over with me then; my head and heart, and everything else were carried away. I give the circumstances.

Since his confidences beside the river, my Mother Jacques had not spoken again of his love, but I could see very well by his manner that all was not going as he wished. On Sunday, when he came back from Pierrotte's, he was always sad, and, at night, I heard him sigh and sigh. If I asked: "What is the matter, Jacques?" he answered shortly: "Nothing is the matter." But I

knew that something was wrong, if it were only by the tone in which he spoke. He, so good, so patient, now was sometimes cross with me. Sometimes he looked at me as if we had quarrelled. I suspected, as you may well believe, that there was some serious lover's sorrow at the bottom; but as Jacques persisted in not speaking of it to me, I dared not speak of it either. Nevertheless, on a certain Sunday that he came home more sombre than usual, I wanted to make a clean breast of it.

"Come, Jacques, what is it?" said I, taking his hands. "Are n't things all right *over there?*"

"No, they are not all right," answered the poor boy, in a discouraged tone.

"But what is happening then? Has Pierrotte noticed anything? Does he want to prevent your loving each other?"

"Oh, no, Daniel! Pierrotte does not prevent us. The trouble is that she does not love me and will never love me."

"How foolish, Jacques! How can you know that she will never love you? Have you ever even told her that you loved her? You have n't, have you? Well, then —"

"The man she loves has not spoken; he did not need to speak to be loved."

"Do you really think, Jacques, that the flute-player —"

Jacques seemed not to hear my question.

"The man she loves has not spoken," said he for the second time.

And I could get nothing more out of him.

We could not sleep that night in the tower of Saint-Germain.

Jacques spent most of the time at the window, looking up at the stars and sighing. I was thinking: "Suppose I should go *over there* to see things for myself — for, after all, Jacques may make a mistake. Mdlle. Pierrotte has probably not understood all the love that is lurking in the folds of his cravat. Since Jacques does not dare tell her he loves her, I might do well to tell her for him. Yes, that's it; I will go; I will speak with this little Philistine, and we shall see."

The next day, without informing my Mother Jacques, I put my fine project into execution, and certainly God is my witness that in going *over there*, I had no secret design of my own. I went for Jacques, and for Jacques alone. Nevertheless, when I saw, at the corner of the Passage du Saumon, Lalouette's old shop painted green, with the sign of *China and Glass* in front, I felt a slight beating of the heart that might have forewarned me. I entered; the shop was empty; at the back the man with the flute was taking his dinner: even while eating he kept his instrument beside him on the tablecloth. "It is not possible that Camille should hesitate between that walking-flute and my Mother Jacques," said I to myself as I went upstairs. "At any rate, we shall see."

I found Pierrotte at table, with his daughter and the very deserving person. Luckily for me, the black eyes were not there. When I entered, there was an exclamation of surprise. "Here he is at

last!" cried the good Pierrotte in his voice of thunder. "If I may be allowed to say so, he is going to take his coffee with us." They made room for me; the very deserving person went to get me a beautiful gold-flowered cup, and I sat down beside Mdlle. Pierrotte.

Mdlle. Pierrotte looked very attractive on that day. In her hair, just above her ear, — they don't put them there any more nowadays, — she had stuck a little red rose that was very, very red. Between ourselves, I think that little red rose was a fairy, because it made the little Philistine so much prettier. "Ah, then! Monsieur Daniel," said Pierrotte, with a hearty, affectionate laugh, "it is all over, and you won't come and see us any more." I tried to excuse myself, and spoke of my literary labors. "Oh, yes, I know all about the Latin Quarter!" said Pierrotte, and he began to laugh all the louder, looking at the very deserving person who coughed knowingly, and kicked me under the table. For these good people, the Latin Quarter meant orgies, violins, masquerades, firecrackers, broken dishes, uproarious nights and all the rest. Ah, if I had told them of my monkish life in the tower of Saint-Germain, they would have been much astounded! But you know that when a fellow is young, he is not sorry to pass as a bad case, so, in face of Pierrotte's accusations, I merely assumed a little modest air, and defended myself but feebly. "No, no, I assure you; it is not as you think." Jacques would have laughed to see me.

As we were finishing our coffee, we heard a few notes on the flute in the court-yard. It was a call for Pierrotte to come to the shop. Scarcely had he turned his back when the very deserving person went off, in her turn, to the kitchen for a game of cards with the cook. Between you and me, I think the lady's most deserving quality was being extremely clever at shuffling cards.

Finding myself alone with the little red rose, I thought: "Now is the time," and Jacques' name was already on my lips; but Mdlle. Pierrotte did not give me time to speak. She said suddenly, in a low voice, without looking at me: "Is it the White-Cuckoo who keeps you from coming to see your friends?" At first I thought she was joking; but no, she was not joking. She seemed even much moved, to judge from the flush on her cheek and the rapid flutterings of her chemisette. They must have spoken of the White-Cuckoo before her, and she imagined vaguely things that were not. I might have undeceived her with a word, but some foolish vanity restrained me. Then, as I did not answer, Mdlle. Pierrotte turned toward me, and lifting those long lashes that had till then been cast down, she looked at me. I lie; it was not she who looked at me, but the black eyes all moist with tears and laden with tender reproaches. Ah, dear black eyes, delight of my soul!

It was but a vision. The long lashes sank almost immediately, and I had only Mdlle. Pierrotte, beside me. Quick, quick, without waiting for another apparition, I spoke of Jacques — I began

by saying how good he was, how loyal, brave, and generous. I told the story of his untiring devotion, of his love, watchful as a mother's, that might make a real mother jealous. It was Jacques who fed me, clothed me, earned my living for me, God knows at the price of what work and privations! Without him, I should still be far away, in that black prison of Sarlande, where I had suffered so much, so very much.

At this part of my speech, Mdlle. Pierrotte appeared touched, and I saw a big tear rolling down her cheek. Honestly, I thought it was for Jacques, and I said to myself: "It is all going on very well." Thereupon I redoubled my eloquence. I spoke of Jacques' melancholy and the deep mysterious love that was consuming his heart. Ah! thrice blessed the woman who —

Here the little red rose that Mdlle. Pierrotte wore in her hair, slipped, I know not how, and fell at my feet. Just at that moment I was seeking for some delicate means of making young Camille understand that she was the thrice blessed woman with whom Jacques was in love. The little red rose falling furnished me with this means. — I told you the little red rose was a fairy. — I picked it up quickly, but took care not to return it. "It will be for Jacques, from you," said I to Mdlle. Pierrotte with my most subtle smile. "For Jacques, if you like," answered Mdlle. Pierrotte, with a sigh; but at the same instant, the black eyes appeared and looked at me tenderly, as if to say: "No, not for Jacques, for you!" And if you

could have seen how well they said it, with what fiery candor, with what modest and irresistible passion! I still hesitated, however, and they were obliged to repeat two or three times over: "Yes, for you, for you." Then I kissed the little red rose and put it in my bosom.

When Jacques came home that evening, he found me bending over my rhyming-table as usual, and I allowed him to think I had not been out all day. As ill-luck would have it, when I undressed, the little red rose I had kept in my bosom dropped on the ground at the foot of the bed: all fairies are malicious. Jacques saw it, took it up, and looked at it a long time. I know not which was redder, the red rose or I.

"I know this," he said; "it is a rose from the bush *over there*, that stands by the drawing-room window."

Then he added, returning it to me:

"She has never given me one."

He spoke so sadly that the tears came to my eyes.

"Jacques, dear Jacques, I swear that till to-night—"

He interrupted me gently: "Don't excuse yourself, Daniel. I am sure you have done nothing to betray me. I knew it, I knew all along it was you she loved. Remember how I said to you: 'The man she loves has not spoken; he has not needed to speak to be loved.'" Thereupon, the poor fellow began to stride up and down the room. I looked at him, motionless, my red rose in my

hand. "What has happened was bound to come," he resumed, after a moment's pause. "I have foreseen all this a long time. I knew that if she saw you, she would never care about me. That is why I delayed taking you *over there* for so long. I was jealous of you in advance. Forgive me, for I loved her so much! At last one day, I resolved to put it to the trial, and I let you go with me. On that day, dear boy, I knew it was all over; at the end of five minutes, she looked at you as she had never looked at anybody before. You noticed it yourself. Oh! Don't say no, for you did notice it. The proof is that you let more than a month pass without going back there, but, good Heavens! that did me no good. For such souls as hers, the absent are never in the wrong; on the contrary, every time I went there, she did nothing but talk to me of you, and so artlessly, with so much confidence and love. It was genuine torture to me. Now, it is all over, and I like it better so."

Jacques spoke thus for a long time, with the same gentleness, and the same resigned smile. All he said gave me both pain and pleasure; pain, because I knew he was unhappy, and pleasure, because through all his words, I could see the black eyes shining upon me, all full of me. When he had done, I went up to him, rather shamefaced, but still holding the little red rose:

"Jacques, shan't you love me any more now?" He smiled, and, pressing me to his heart, said: "How silly you are! I shall love you all the more."

This was true. The story of the red rose changed none of my Mother Jacques's tenderness for me, not even his temper. I believe he suffered a great deal, but he never let me see it. He never sighed nor complained. As in the past, he continued to go *over there* on Sunday, and to meet everything bravely. He omitted nothing except the manifold ways of tying his cravat. Moreover, he was always calm and noble, worked himself to death, and walked courageously through life, his eyes fixed on a single aim, that of rebuilding the hearth.

O Jacques! My Mother Jacques!

As to me, from the day when I could love the black eyes freely, without remorse, I threw myself madly into my passion. I never left the Pierrotte household. I had won all hearts there — at the price of what meannesses, good God! Of bringing sugar to M. Lalouette, of playing cards with the very deserving person — I stopped at nothing. My name in that house was Desire-of-pleasing. Generally, Desire-of-pleasing went there toward the middle of the day. At that hour Pierrotte was in the shop, and Mdlle. Camille alone up-stairs, in the drawing-room, with the very deserving person. As soon as I arrived, the black eyes appeared at once, and the very deserving person left us to ourselves. This noble lady whom Pierrotte had engaged as companion to his daughter, thought herself absolved from her duties when she saw me there. It was quick, quick to the kitchen with the cook and out with the cards. I did not

complain; just think of it! I was all alone with the black eyes.

O God! what happy hours I passed in that little yellow drawing-room! Almost always I carried with me a book, one of my favorite poets, and read passages from it to the black eyes, which filled with sweet tears or flashed lightnings, according to the selections. During this time, Mdlle. Pierrotte sat near us, embroidering slippers for her father or playing her eternal *Reveries of Rosellen;* but we left her quite to herself, I assure you. Sometimes, however, at the most pathetic part of the reading, the little bourgeoise made some ridiculous reflection aloud, as: "I must send for the tuner," or again, "I have put two stitches too many in my slipper." Then I would close my book in vexation, not wishing to read any farther; but the black eyes had a certain way of looking at me that appeased me at once, and I continued.

It was, doubtless, very imprudent to leave us thus always alone in the yellow drawing-room. You must remember that both of us together, the black eyes and Desire-of-pleasing, did not make up the sum of thirty-four years. Fortunately, Mdlle. Pierrotte never left us, and she was a very wise, prudent, and watchful guardian, just the one needed to mount guard over gunpowder. One day, I recollect, we were seated, the black eyes and I, on a sofa in the drawing-room, on a mild May afternoon. The window was half-open, the long curtains drawn, and falling to the ground. We were reading *Faust* that day. When we had

finished, the book slipped from my hands; we stayed a moment, one close against the other, without speaking, in the silence and dim light. Her head was leaning on my shoulder; through her partly opened chemisette, I could see some little silver medals glittering below her tucker. All at once, Mdlle. Pierrotte appeared before us. You should have seen how quickly she sent me to the other side of the sofa, and what a sermon! "What you are doing is very wrong, my dear children," said she to us. "You abuse the confidence shown you. You must tell her father of your intentions. Come, Daniel, when shall you speak?" I promised to speak to Pierrotte very shortly, as soon as I should finish my great poem. This promise pacified our guardian; but, all the same, from that day, the black eyes were forbidden to sit on the sofa by the side of Desire-of-pleasing.

Ah, Mdlle. Pierrotte was a very rigid young person! Only fancy that at first she would not allow the black eyes to write to me; in the end, however, she consented, on the express condition that all the letters should be shown to her. Unhappily, Mdlle. Pierrotte was not content with reading over those adorable, passionate letters the black eyes wrote me; she often inserted some phrases on her own account, like this, for example:

"I am very sad this morning. I found a spider in my wardrobe. A spider in the morning, take warning."

Or again:

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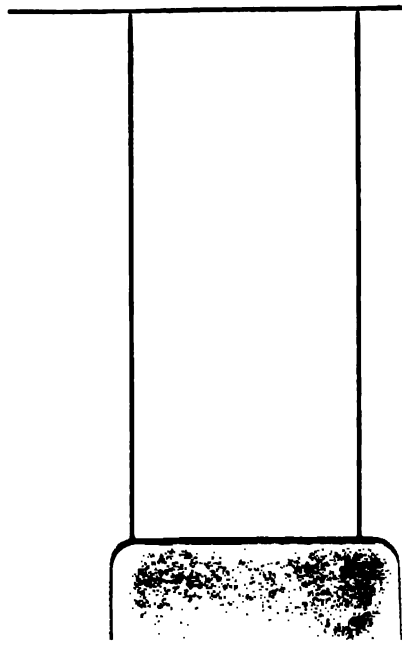
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